AI-Assisted Essay Outlining

This assignment will help you transform your initial brainstorming ideas on your selected topic into a structured essay outline using AI. You will start with a freewrite, then ask AI to generate an outline that fits a specific essay structure (e.g., argumentative, comparative, or cause and effect). This process will help you develop a focused and organized approach to writing.

Preparing to Use AI Tools

Understanding AI language models

AI tools like [ChatGPT](#) and [Claude](#) are designed to generate human-like text responses. These AI language models can be used to understand and generate natural language, making them highly versatile for a wide range of uses, from answering questions to assisting with content creation. AI's ability to learn from a vast body of text allows it to provide informative, contextually relevant responses across diverse topics.

You input directions, instructions, or a question, and the AI tool generates a response. The input that you give to the AI tool is called a prompt.

Writing Effective Prompts

- Be Clear and Specific
  - Example: Instead of "Tell me how to organize a paper," use "List strategies for organizing an argumentative essay on climate change."

- Provide context
  - Example: Instead of "Give me tips for how to write introductions," use "You are an expert in academic writing. I'm drafting an essay about the impact of social media on mental health. Suggest 5 different strategies for writing an engaging introduction, tailored for a college-level audience."

- Iterative Approach
  - Example: Initial prompt: List 10 common logical fallacies students should avoid in persuasive essays.
  - Example: Follow-up: Of these fallacies, which are most often found in essays on controversial topics like gun control or climate policy?

Verifying AI-Generated Information

- Cross-Check Facts. Do not assume that AI-generated output is accurate or authentic. AI often makes up fictional responses to answer questions. Because you cannot be certain of the source of the AI's output, it is important to verify AI responses with credible sources.

- Critical Thinking. While its responses may seem like AI is doing analysis and critical thinking, the AI tool is actually programmed to respond to your prompt based on patterns in language. It is analyzing those language patterns to generate a response. This is very different from the synthesis of information and critical thinking about concepts that your human mind does naturally. You have to review each response and evaluate the plausibility and accuracy of AI responses and whether they logically make sense.

Acknowledging Use of AI

Your use of AI should be disclosed so that you are not taking credit for work that was not created by you. Use your instructor's preferred method of acknowledgment.

Instructions

STEP 1: Freewrite on Your Topic

- Set a timer for 10-15 minutes and write freely about your chosen topic.
- Include all ideas, opinions, examples, and connections that come to mind—don't worry about structure or grammar.
- Your freewrite should be at least 300 words.

STEP 2: Use AI to Generate an Outline

Copy and paste your freewrite into an AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) and ask it to suggest an outline based on a specific essay structure.

Example Prompts:

- *"Based on this freewrite, create an outline for an argumentative essay using the block format."*
- *"Organize these ideas into a cause-and-effect essay outline."*
- *"Create a comparative essay outline using both block and point-by-point methods."*

Review the AI-generated outline and decide whether it aligns with your topic and purpose.

STEP 3: Evaluate and Revise the Outline

Compare AI's outline with the suggested essay structures provided in the course content. Ask yourself:

- Does the outline logically organize my ideas?
- Are the main points clear and well-structured?
- Does it follow the correct format for the essay type?

Revise the outline as needed, ensuring that it fits your writing goals and incorporates your most relevant ideas.

STEP 4: Reflect (300-400 words)

Write a reflection discussing:

- How helpful was AI in organizing your ideas into an outline?
- Did AI structure your ideas effectively, or did you need to make significant changes?
- How did this process help you refine your topic and focus your essay?
- What did you learn about essay structure through this process?

STEP 5: Submit Your Assignment

Submit a document that includes:

- Your original freewrite (at least 300 words)
- AI-generated outline
- Your revised version of the outline
- Your reflection (300-400 words)

Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Inadequate
Freewrite Quality and Depth	Freewrite is 300+ words and explores the topic in depth with a wide range of ideas, examples, and connections. Demonstrates strong engagement.	Freewrite meets length requirement and includes relevant ideas and examples, though some may lack depth.	Freewrite is underdeveloped or close to the word limit. Ideas may be repetitive, vague, or disconnected.	Freewrite is too short, lacks focus, or contains few relevant or original ideas.
Outline Evaluation and Revision	Clearly evaluates AI's outline and thoughtfully revises it to align with essay structure, topic, and purpose. Final outline is logical, well-organized, and well-matched to the essay type.	Identifies strengths and weaknesses in AI's outline and revises it with minor improvements. Final outline mostly aligns with essay goals.	Makes limited revisions to the AI-generated outline. Organization may still be unclear or not fully aligned with essay type.	Shows minimal evaluation or revision of AI's outline. Final outline remains poorly organized or inappropriate for essay type.
Reflection and Insight	Reflection fully addresses all questions with detailed insight about the role of AI, outlining strategies, and writing development.	Reflection addresses most questions with some insight into the process and what was learned.	Reflection touches on main questions but lacks detail, depth, or personal engagement.	Reflection is incomplete, off-topic, or shows little effort or understanding of the assignment goals.