

Topic: Outlining Essays

Purpose

- Outlining is a way to organize thoughts, guide ideas, and finalize areas that need to be researched and presented.
- An outline is a map or a plan which drafts your route. Imagine going to an unfamiliar place with no plan and no direction. You will never get where you need to be.
- Many writers simply “free write” without organizing their ideas and can (a) get sidetracked, (b) get off topic, or (c) lose their train of thought.
- Creating an outline of your ideas will help you stay focused, stay on topic, and stay within the guidelines of the assignment (see *Dissecting Assignments*).

Step one: Create the outline

- Divide & conquer!
 - Make a list of the steps involved in completing your project.
 - What needs to be included in each part of the essay?
 - What is your goal of the essay?
 - What do you have to prove (this is your thesis)?
 - How will you prove your idea(s) (these are your three main ideas)?
 - What do you have to research?
- Use your assignment as a guide for the essay’s requirements (see *Dissecting Assignments*).

Step two: Create a consistent guide

- Consistency within main ideas will keep you on track! What you do for one, you do for all!
 - This technique will also help you stay focused and help you build content.
- Word main ideas similarly: I came, I saw, I conquered.
 - First, the water supply on Long Island...
 - Second, the water supply on Long Island...
 - Finally, the water supply on Long Island...
 - You can always change verbiage during the revision process if the language sounds redundant.
- Try to answer the following questions to collect appropriate content:
 - What is your main idea? STATEMENT
 - Use transitions: First, second, finally
 - What is your evidence that supports your main idea? EVIDENCE
 - For example...
 - What is the significance of the evidence? EXPLANATION
 - This is important because...

- How or why is this evidence relevant to the main idea & thesis?

Step three: Check for accuracy

- You may present multiple perspectives of evidence within each main idea.
- Follow the simple guide for accuracy.
 - Main idea 1: Statement (What is the main point?)
 - Topic (What is your first topic that supports this idea?)
 - Discussion of topic
 - Evidence
 - Explanation
 - (Transition) Topic (What is your second topic that supports this idea?)
 - Evidence
 - Explanation
- Multiple pieces of evidence within one main idea should be broken into separate paragraphs and should use transitions.