

Outlining Guide

In the transition from high school writing to college-level writing, it is important to think of your papers in terms of “sections,” rather than all the information for one main idea in one body paragraph. Here is a helpful outline that can help you get into that mindset.

Introduction:

- Hook
- Main Ideas/Brief overview of topic
- Thesis

Note: Professors have certain preferences for what kind of hook they like, what your intro should include, and how your thesis should be structured. Keep that in mind!

Background:

- Definitions
- Context
- Key background information to help the reader

Note: In each section, you can have as many body paragraphs as you need to get your point across. Just be sure to explain everything! Assume your reader knows nothing about your topic unless instructed to think otherwise.

Reason 1:

- AXES (or any other method for paragraph building)
- Includes Evidence (+ citation) and explanation

Reason 2:

- AXES (or any other method for paragraph building)
- Includes Evidence (+ citation) and explanation

Note: You can use more than one quote in a paragraph, but make sure to explain each quote thoroughly; illustrate how each quote supports the argument/point you are trying to make. You should usually keep it to two citations maximum per paragraph.

Opposing View/Counterargument:

- Includes Evidence (+ citation) and explanation
- Opposing View: The opposite stance of your argument
- Counterargument: Why your stance of the argument is correct

Conclusion:

- Restate main ideas
- Restate thesis
- Significance of the issue
- Call to action

Note: Again, instructors will have preferences on what you should/should not include in your conclusion. Check with the prompt when constructing an outline.

Keep in mind that your professor often will have specific things that you will need to include in your essay, so this outline may shift according to those expectations and requirements!

