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**ESSAY OUTLINING**

Writing an outline before beginning a paper is the most effective way to organize your thoughts. Drawing an outline can give you a good visual picture of the final essay. An outline is a *time-saving*tool that shows you visually-before you write-whether your essay will flow logically and be long enough to fulfill your instructor's page requirement.

**1. Outline definition**

An outline can be defined as an organizational *plan* to help you draft a paper. An outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, hierarchical manner to help you see the overall format of your composition.

An outline is usually in the form of *a list* divided into headings and sub-headings that distinguish between main points and supporting ones. The outline is *a sketch* of the content of a text that is often written out in phrases rather than in full sentences. The outline is essentially a blueprint of a text in the sense that it indicates the general ideas that will be explored, but does not necessarily provide all the details. Students follow their outline carefully so that they may arrange their ideas effectively.

The outline can *be changed* and *improved*. Students have to make it their helpful tools; they should not become its slaves. They will naturally try to perfect their plan before they start to write the essay, but the actual writing will certainly suggest some desirable changes in the arrangements of details. The outline can help students (or writers) focus their paper and can reveal the need for further expansion or limitation of their topic.

**2. Outline types**

There are two kinds of outlines*: the topic* outline and *the sentence* outline.

• **The topic outline** consists of short phrases. It is particularly useful when you are dealing with a

number of different issues that could be arranged in a variety of ways in your paper.

• **The sentence outline** is done in full sentences. It is normally used when your paper focuses on

complex details. A sentence outline also allows you to include those details in the sentences instead of having to create an outline of many short phrases that goes on page after page.

Both topic and sentence outlines follow *rigid formats*, using Roman ( I,II,III…) and Arabic numerals (1,2,3,…) along with capital and small letters of the alphabet ( A,B,C,…,or a,b,c,…). This helps both you and anyone who reads your outline to follow your organization easily. This is the kind of outline most commonly used for classroom papers and speeches .There is no rule for which type of outline is best. Choose the one that you think works well for your paper.

**2.1.Outline Examples**

**2.1.1.Topic outline**

**Title :Choices in College and After**

**Thesis**: The decisions I have to make in choosing college courses depends on larger questions I am beginning to ask myself about my life’s work.

I. Two decisions described

A. Art history or chemistry

1. Professional considerations

2. Personal considerations

B. A third year of French?

1. Practical advantages of knowing a foreign language

2. Intellectual advantages

3. The issue of necessity

II. Definition of the problem

A. Decisions about occupation

B. Decisions about a kind of life to lead

III. Temporary resolution of the problem

A. To hold open a professional possibility: chemistry

B. To take advantage of cultural gains already made: French

**2.1.2.Sentence outline**

**Title: Choices in College and After**

**Thesis**: The decisions I have to make in choosing college courses depends on larger questions I am beginning to ask myself about my life’s work.

**I.** I have two decisions to make with respect to choosing college courses in the immediate future.

A. One is whether to elect a course in art history or in chemistry.

1. One time in my life, I planned to be a chemical engineer professionally.

2. On the other hand, I enjoy art and plan to travel and see more of it.

B. The second decision is whether to continue a third year of French beyond the basic college requirement.

1. French might be useful both in engineering and travel.

2. Furthermore, I am eager to read good books which are written in French.

3. How necessary are these considerations in the light of other courses I might take instead?

**II.** My problem can be put in the form of a dilemma involving larger questions about my whole future.

A. On the one hand, I want to hold a highly-trained position in a lucrative profession.

B. On the other hand, I want to lead a certain kind of life, with capacities for values not connected with the making of money.

**III.** I will have to make a decision balancing the conflicting needs I have described.

A. I will hold open the professional possibilities by electing chemistry.

B. I will improve and solidify what cultural proficiency in another language I have already gained, by electing French.

**3. Outlinewriting**

* **Identify the topic**. The topic of your paper is important. Try to sum up the point of your paper in one sentence or phrase. This will help your paper stay focused on the main point.
* **Identify the main categories.** What main points will you cover? The introduction usually introduces all of your main points, and then the rest of paper can be spent developing those points.
* **Create the first category.** What is the first point you want to cover? If the paper centers around a complicated term, a definition is often a good place to start. For a paper about a particular theory, giving the general background on the theory can be a good place to begin.
* **Create sub-categories.** After you have the main point, create points under it that provide support for the main point. The number of categories that you use depends on the amount of information that you are going to cover; there is no right or wrong number to use.

**4. Basic five-paragraph outline frame ( Blank sample)**

**I. Introduction** (write the thesis statement)………………………………… ……………………….

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**II. Main idea** (write a topic sentence (Nr.one) supporting the thesis statement)……………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………

A. Supporting detail / Example…………………………………………………………………...…...

B. Supporting detail / Example …………………………………………………………………….....

C. Supporting detail/ Example ………………………………………………………………………..

**III. Main idea** (write a topic sentence (Nr.two) supporting the thesis statement) …………………...

A. Supporting detail / Example …………………………………………………………………….…

B. Supporting detail/ Example ……………………………………………………………………..…

C. Supporting detail / Example ……………………………………………………………………….

**IV. Main idea** (write a topic sentence (Nr.three) supporting the thesis statement) ………………......

A. Supporting detail / Example …………………………………….…………………………………

B. Supporting detail / Example …………………….…………………………………………………

C. Supporting detail / Example ……………………………………………….………………………

**V. Conclusion** (write a topic sentence based on the purpose of the paper or speech: summarize main points, reiterate thesis statement, offer a solution to a problem, or pose a question)…………… …………………………………………………………………………………………………………