

4. The Thesis and the Outline



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4a. The thesis: Definition and function



- Summarizes the central idea
- Establishes a boundary around subject
- Chart an orderly course for the paper
- Gives the reader an idea;
make the paper easier to read

4a-1 Formulating the thesis



- Must be expressed in *one sentence*
- Looking for a central idea + summarizes
the information + with your own opinions

4a-2 Rules for wording the thesis



Good thesis should:

- (1) be clear, comprehensible, and direct
- (2) predict major divisions in the structure
- (3) commit you to an unmistakable course, argument, or point of view

- Commit you to a single line of argument



Hip-hop music arose during the 1970s, and is performed by many famous singers now, such as 50 cent, who was awarded as Favorite Hip-Hop Male Artist in 2003.

➤ **Because of the popularity of block parties in New York city, hip-hop music began to arise during the 1970s.**

- Should not be figurative language



Jolin is the Rihanna of the pop music in Taiwan.

- ✎ **Jolin is a successful pop singer in Taiwan because of her easy-recognized voice, attractive appearance, and diligence.**

- Should not be vague

Listening to music can influence people.



☞ **Listening to music influences people by changing their moods, relieving their stress, and helping sleep.**

- Should not be a question



Do people in America support Taiwan to gain a U.N. seat?

- **Over 55% Americans support Taiwan to gain a U.N. seat, according to a newspaper released on Sep. 23.**

- Should be a single, easily understood sentence



4a-3 Placing the thesis

- **the final sentence of the first paragraph**

4a-4 Choosing a title



- Clear
- Specific
- Informative

★ Thesis is a good source for a title

4b. The Outline

- An ordered list of the topics covered in a paper
- Useful to writer and reader → less stray from the point or to commit a structural error

Ex: Overdevelop one topic while skimping on another



4b-1 Visual conventions of the outline



The conventions of formal outlining

Main Idea: Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, etc.)

Subideas: capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc)

**Division of a subidea: Arabic numerals
(1,2,3,4,etc.)**



Minor Ideas: lowercase letters (a,b,c,d,etc.)

Ex:

I. Main idea

A. Subidea

B. Subidea

1. Division of a subidea

2. Division of a subidea

a. Minor idea

b. Minor idea

II. Main idea



- Support your contentions and propositions with examples and details
- Make assertions that are supported by concrete examples and specific details





- Every category—subdivided at least once
→ impossible to divide anything into fewer than two parts
- Outline: divides the subject into three or four levels
→ down to examples or details—adequate for most college-level research papers

Format of Further Subdivisions



I.

A.

1.

a.

(1)

(a)

- Larger ideas or elements—stack to the left, with smaller ideas or elements to the right

4b-2 Equal ranking in outline entries



- **The logic of an outline:** each entry has to be based on the same organizing principle as another entry
- **All capital-letter entries:** be equivalent in importance and derived from the same organizing principle.

Ex:

I. Rousseau gave the people a new government to work toward.

A. It would be a government based on the general will.

B. The new government would serve the people instead of the people serving the government.

C. The people tore down the Bastille.





- **Entries A and B:** subideas—characterize the new government proposed by Rousseau
- **Entry C:** out of place—not equal rank with entries A and B
 - a statement that describes the revolt of the French people against the old government

4b-3 Parallelism in outline entries

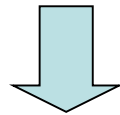


- The entries are worded in similar grammatical form.
- It is easier to read and understanding.

Ex:



- I . The uses of the laser in the military
 - A. For range finding
 - B. For surveillance
 - C. **To illuminate** the enemy's position



C. **For illuminating** the enemy's position

4b-4 Types of outlines



- The topic outline
 - The sentence outline
 - The paragraph outline
- ★ Use **one** type of outline exclusively
- ★ Never mix or combine the different formats in your paper

a. The topic outline

- Each item as a phrase
- Make the subject into the major subheadings
- It is useful for outlining relatively simple subjects



b. The sentence outline



- It uses a complete sentence for each item
- It is especially well suited for complex subjects
- ★ Some instructors allow the entries to be questions, but most prefer declarative sentences

c. The paragraph outline

- Each item as a complete paragraph
- It is used to produce a condensed version of the paper
- It is useful for long papers whose individual sections can be summarized in whole paragraphs
- ★ This type of outline is seldom recommended by instructors for college papers



4b-5 Decimal outline notation



- Decimal outline form permits an infinite number of **subdivision** through the addition of another decimal place
- This form has been gaining favor in business and science

Sample decimal outline



Thesis:-----

1. Introduction

1.1 evidence relate to the introduction

1.2 evidence relate to the introduction

1.2.1 positive view about 1.2

1.2.2 negative view about 1.2

2. Body

2.1 relate to the body

2.1.1 -----

* The pattern of decimal outline form puts larger ideas to the left and smaller ideas to the right

4b-6 Choosing an outline form



- Which kind of outline should you use?

A : Detailed sentence outline

- Why ?

A : If you are a beginning writer, and if your research has found much detail on your subject

Detailed sentence outline form



- Develop it at least down to the third level-
the level of Arabic numerals
- The main entries of this outline should be
the topic sentences of various paragraphs
- Its details should be supported the topic
sentence

Sample detailed sentence outline form



I. : Introduction (Topic Sentence)

A : Subidea

1. the details are used word by word
2. support the subidea

II. : Body (Develop points in your thesis)

B : -----

1. -----

2. -----

What kind of information can be provided by the detailed sentence outline?



- It can become a condensed version of the paper.
- Any paragraph is easy to write when you know what its main point must be and what details it should contain.

Correct outline notion



- The movement from thesis to outline to final paper is not always neat, predictable, and certain.
- It can be messy.
- The outline what you draft is different from the actual paper you write. (It is a healthy sign.)
- Your aim is to write a good paper, not a good outline.