

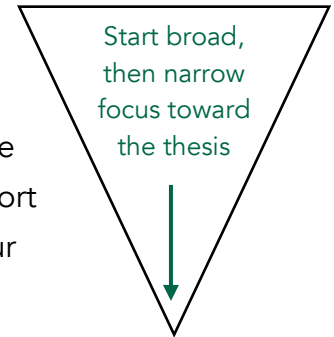
Building an Outline

Outlines are useful tools that help us focus and organize the ideas we plan to write about. They help us answer these questions: What do I want to say? In what order do I need to present that information? Do all of my planned paragraphs relate to my thesis statement? What evidence and transitions do I need to support and connect my ideas?

The following guidelines will help you create an outline for your next essay.

Introduction

- Attention-grabbing device: Spark your readers' interest with a question, quotation, statistic, or story. Ask yourself how you can get readers to care about your topic.
- Background information: Consider what readers need to know before they can read your paper. This section might include definitions, a short historical account, or an introduction of sources. Be sure to check your assignment prompt to make sure the introduction fulfills its purpose.
- Narrow the focus down into your thesis statement.



Working Thesis Statement

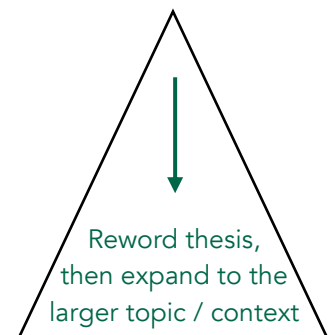
- One (or two) sentence(s) that clearly states the focus of your essay
- Typically located at the end of an introduction paragraph
- Double-check the assignment prompt to make sure your thesis fulfills the purpose and expectations for your essay (ie. are you responding to or analyzing a text, making a debatable claim, or _____ ?)

Body Paragraphs

- Begin with a topic sentence that focuses on one main idea that supports the thesis.
- Identify evidence from your sources that support the topic sentence's point. Use the properly cited evidence to illustrate your point.
- Explain how the evidence from your sources relates to your topic sentence and your thesis. In other words, why is this particular source material relevant?

Conclusion

- Reword your thesis. Don't copy and paste; remember to rephrase!
- Summarize your main points.
- Be sure not to cite or offer new information as part of the conclusion.
- Offer some commentary on the impact that this topic has on a larger idea or context. Try to leave your readers with something to think about.



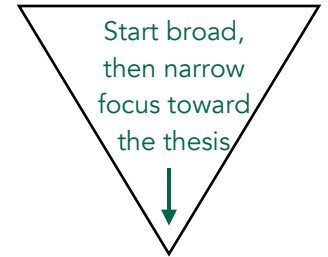
Building an Outline

Your turn!

Note: The number of body paragraphs in your outline and essay will depend on the assignment instructions. This general template can be adapted as needed.

Introduction

- Attention Getter:
- Background Information:
- Working Thesis:



Body Paragraph One

- Main point:
- Information/evidence:
- Explanation of relevance:

Body Paragraph Two

- Main point:
- Information/evidence:
- Explanation of relevance:

Body Paragraph Three

- Main point:
- Information/evidence:
- Explanation of relevance:

Body Paragraph Four

- Main point:
- Information/evidence:
- Explanation of relevance:

Conclusion:

- Summarize main points:
- Restate thesis:
- Lasting idea:

