

THE OUTLINE

Before writing an essay or a paper, you must organize your points and plan the structure of your discussion. It is best to do this after your thesis is determined.

The simplest type of outline is a list of points jotted down in note form for your own use. On the other hand, teachers may require you to submit a formal, detailed outline before you proceed with a major assignment.

INFORMAL OUTLINES

Even in an informal outline, it is best to write out your thesis as a full sentence since it represents the overall point of your essay. Then write down a list of main supporting points.

Thesis: The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway contributed greatly to the development of western Canada in the late 1800s.

--growth of new towns and cities

--European settlers → the Prairies

--expansion of trade --western grain → eastern markets

--manufactured goods → the West

Look over your list. Decide on the best sequence for your points and then number them. As you draft your essay, develop each of your points into a paragraph.

An informal outline can be prepared in a few minutes and will be of great help in coordinating your essay. It gives you a plan to follow and ensures that all your points support your thesis.

FORMAL OUTLINES

Sometimes a detailed formal outline is required for a major essay or research paper. Your teacher might ask you to submit it in advance for approval or even for grading. Whether required by the teacher or not, a detailed outline is very useful. Organizing your points with care allows you to produce a well-structured, effective work.

Formal outlines open with your thesis statement, expressed in a single sentence. Major points and sub-points of the entire essay are then arranged using a system of numbers, letters, and indentations. Points may be expressed in full sentences or in point form. (Check your teacher's preference.)

The model outline on the back of this sheet follows MLA format. It shows the essay's main points (designated by the Roman numerals I, II, III). Each main point is followed by supporting points (A, B, C...). Some of the supporting points have sub-points or details (1, 2, 3...).

This is a basic, commonly used format. Your teacher might assign a slightly different version. (Note that in this model, points are written in full sentences rather than in point form.)

OUTLINE

Thesis: The government of the Progressive Development Party under Moses Zumboddi brought major improvements to social conditions in Fehrawai between 1965 and 1975.

- I. Social conditions in Fehrawai before to 1965 were poor.
 - A. Poverty was extreme and widespread.
 - 1. Famine was common in rural areas.
 - 2. Low wages and unemployment affected the urban working class.
 - B. Housing and basic facilities were inadequate.
 - 1. Many rural people still lived in mud huts.
 - 2. Conditions in urban slums were desperate.
 - 3. Basic utilities were inadequate.
 - C. Medical care was limited.
 - 1. Hospitals were few and poorly equipped.
 - 2. The infant mortality was among the highest in the region.
 - 3. The population suffered frequent epidemics.
 - D. Education was limited to a privileged minority.
- II. Economic development under the Zumboddi government brought social improvements.
 - A. Financial aid was obtained from foreign governments.
 - B. Immediate improvements to roads allowed trade to develop.
 - C. New economic ventures generated jobs and income.
 - 1. New mines began production in the interior.
 - 2. Efficient fruit plantations were developed.
 - 3. Tourism was promoted.
- III. Social conditions were significantly improved within ten years.
 - A. Basic facilities showed great improvement by 1975.
 - 1. Electricity was available in 80% of the country.
 - 2. Housing projects had improved many people's lives.
 - 3. Sanitation was a national priority, reducing disease.
 - B. Health care was modernized nationwide.
 - 1. Life expectancy had risen and infant mortality had decreased.
 - 2. National vaccination programs reduced epidemics.
 - 3. New hospitals and clinics served all regions of the country.
 - C. Education was effectively promoted.
 - 1. Basic education was available to all children.
 - 2. Literacy rates had increased nationwide.
 - 3. Scholarships allowed students to attend foreign universities.