

Preliminary Outline

Research Question: _____

Thesis: _____

I.

A.

1.

a.

b.

c.

i.

ii.

iii.

2.

3.

B.

1.

2.

a.

b.

3.

C.

1.

2.

3.

II.

A.

B.

C.

III.

IV.

V.

Formal Outlines

I. Structured Outlines

A structure outline uses indentation and numbers/letters to indicate various levels of subordination. The main points of an outline form the major headings, and the supporting ideas form the subheadings.

II. Purpose

Creating a formal outline is helpful when planning the draft of a paper, and then later when revising it. If an outline shows only one sub-group under a heading, that section of the draft needs rethinking.

III. Outline Headings

Outline headings are usually noun phrases rather than complete sentences. This kind of topic outline has the advantage of brevity and clarity. The headings highlight the major divisions of your paper.

IV. Parallel Structure

Parallel structures are used in outlines to indicate ideas of equal importance. They are expressed in grammatically parallel fashion.

EX: I like to swim, to dance, and to have fun.

OR: I like swimming, dancing, and having fun.

NOT: I like swimming, to dance, and having fun.

V. Tips for working with Outlines

- A. There should never be an “A” without a “B”, a “1” without a “2”, etc.
- B. Capitalize the first letter in each heading, but not each word
- C. Avoid full sentences and punctuation at the end of your phrases
- D. Picture each capital letter (A, B, etc) being its own paragraph in your paper

Practice with the following example: main headings are given, but can you fill in what could go within those headings?

- I. Causes of air pollution
- II. Examples of air pollution
- III. Effects of air pollution
- IV. Solutions for air pollution