



Outlines

Many writers organize their work more quickly and easily when they first make an outline of the material they wish to cover. The organizing principle of your outline will depend on your topic, the argument you intend to make, and the expectations of your audience. Realize that there are as many types of outlines as there are writers! Some people work better with longer outlines of complete sentences; others find that simple keywords do the trick. Whether you are developing a topic outline or a sentence outline, keep the following points in mind:

- Work from your thesis statement. In fact, it's wise to put it at the top of your outline for reference.
- Use parallel grammatical structure for parallel levels in the outline. In other words, if A. and B. are nouns, C. and D. must be nouns as well.
- The system of numbers and letters is important (for example, 1. 2. 3., with subtopics lettered A. B. C. under each number) because they reflect the logic of the outline.

Here is an example of the beginning of an outline for an imaginary essay:

Here is my thesis statement.

1. At this time in history, men (older than 18) in cities performed a variety of jobs for pay.
 - A. Example:
 - B. Example:
 - C. Example:
 - D. Example:
2. Boys in cities were more limited in the types of paid work available, yet they still had options.
 - A. Example:
 - B. Example:
 - C. Example:
3. Women's roles were restricted to (unpaid) work within the home, or a very few types of paid work that were home-based.
 - A. Example:
 - B. Example:
 - C. Example:
 - D. Example:
4. Girls generally were not allowed to perform work for pay within or outside the home.
 - A. Example:
 - B. Example:

Finally, remember that outlining is not the only prewriting activity you can try. See the KU Writing Center writing guide on Prewriting Strategies for more ideas.