



Outlines

Creating a Working Outline

An outline is a systematic way of organizing your ideas for your paper. Any list can be an informal outline and may work for your purposes. Sometimes you may want to use a formal outline to manage your information as your research expands. This can help you organize and manage your information as you draft your paper.

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. 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.
- Most word processing programs will automatically fill in the numbers and letters when they recognize that you are creating an outline.
- Start with broader topics and then work toward the specifics.

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

Here is the thesis statement.

1. At this time in history, men (older than 18) in cities performed a variety of jobs for pay.
 - a. Example: Professional
 - i. Banker
 - ii. Lawyer
 - iii. Doctor
 - b. Example: Services
 - i. Policeman
 - ii. Fireman
 - c. Example: Hospitality
 - i. Chefs
 - ii. Hotel management
2. Boys in cities were more limited in the types of paid work available, yet they still had options.
 - a. Example: Bellboys
 - b. Example: Newspaper carriers
 - c. Example: Delivery Services
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: Tailoring services
 - b. Example: Laundry services
 - c. Example: Childcare services
4. Girls generally were not allowed to perform work for pay within or outside the home.
 - a. Example:
 - b. Example:

Outlining is not the only prewriting activity you can try. See the KU Writing Center writing guide on [Prewriting Strategies](#) for more ideas. Or, [Make an Appointment](#)