

Outlining in Writing

Outlining is a formal way of thinking and organizing writing. It is used to link and prioritize ideas before the actual writing. Whether basic or detailed, an effective outline represents and maps out the main ideas the reader will select. Using outlines effectively helps writers improve their writing skills. An essay outline is an important tool for prewriting. It not only narrows down the topic, but also provides room for any gathered research, and establishing a thesis statement. Though not required to be lengthy, an effective outline organizes the list of all the ideas for the essay. A simple outline covers the three parts of writing: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. This is a clear map of the ideas in the main section of the writing.

In the outline, the introduction section will clearly state the thesis statement explaining to the readers what the essay is all about. It will summarize the main topic sentences that will be discussed in the essay body (McWhorter, 2009 pp. 22–23). The outline section highlighting the body of the writing will give a guideline used to develop the topic sentences and link it to thesis statement. It will show the topic sentence for each paragraph that is related to the thesis. For each paragraph, this will be in four parts: a topic sentence, an explanation of the topic sentence, list of examples, evidence, or quotation that supports the topic sentence, and an explanation of the significance of that example/evidence/quotation (McWhorter, 2009 pp. 366–413).

After breaking down the body into key points, the outline will give a guideline for concluding the writing. It will briefly mention the main topic sentences and argue how they support the thesis statement. In most cases the conclusion is highly borrowed from the introduction.

An effective outline should clearly give the order in which ideas will be discussed in the writing. This order of ideas can be achieved by use of the information collected or scribbled on the note cards (McWhorter, 2009 pp. 437–438).

Reference:

McWhorter, Kathleen (2009). *Writing Scenarios: Sentences and Paragraph. 2nd Edition*. Longman Publishing Group. Pp. 20-502