Outlines provide a visual representation of an essay’s structural design. Organizing an essay well is crucial to the overall clarity of your argument. Outlines are an important step in writing because they:

1. Clearly show the relationships between ideas in your essay and provide a plan for writing.
2. Help you to consider your topic and to synthesize and reflect on your proposed plan.
3. Help you to determine whether you have researched a topic thoroughly enough.
4. Help you to determine whether the essay makes a convincing argument.

Activities to Perform Before Outlining:

- Read extensively to ensure that you have researched the topic thoroughly.
- Take notes on important ideas (remember to record citations—you will need them later!).
- Group related ideas together, ordering groups from general to specific.

Research Essay Outline:

I. Introduction
   a. Motivation – Why is this topic important?
   b. Objectives – What are the goals of this essay?
   c. Thesis Statement – Overall claim the essay makes
      • An organizational overview of the essay (if appropriate)

II. Body
   a. Literature review
      • Synthesize, rather than summarize, your source material
      • Describe how your research will fit into the academic conversation presented
   b. Method and Analysis (What was done)
      • Description of the scope of the analysis
      • Methods used for first major task
      • Methods used for second major task
      • Methods used for third major task
   c. Results (What was found) [Note: Sometimes this section is combined with Discussion]
      • Results of first major task
      • Results of second major task
      • Results of third major task
   d. Discussion (How your results contribute to knowledge in the field)
      • Example: compare results to literature reviewed
      • Example: show how your contributions have impacted the field
III. Conclusion
   a. Summarize the objectives and approach of the essay
   b. What are the major findings?
   c. Important implications of the findings
   d. Describe future work needed in the field (if applicable)

I. Introduction
   a. Motivation for your audience:
   b. Essay goals:
   c. Thesis Statement (argumentative claim):

II. Body
   a. Literature Review
      • Source 1:
      • Main Point:
      • Source 2:
      • Main Point:
      • Source 3:
      • Main Point:
      • Ideas to Synthesize:
   b. Method and Analysis
      • Method(s) used:
      • Analysis of method(s):
   c. Results
      • Results of research conducted:
   d. Discussion
      • Impact of results and research to your overall study:
      • Impact to the field of study:

III. Conclusion
   a. Reworded Thesis:
   b. Findings, important implications, and final concluding statement: