



Basic Writing Outline

When writing an academic paper, one of the most important basics is the outline; while content and format may vary across disciplines, there are a few basics that are ubiquitous. The basic format presented below includes areas for an introduction, a body, and conclusion and breaks it down from there. If writing a research essay, pair with the “Research Essay Outline and Worksheet” handout for more specific instructions.

Introduction

The number of paragraphs in your introduction will depend upon the overall length of your assigned project. Generally, introductions will remain between one or two paragraphs. For the introduction, ask yourself: What information is necessary background for my topic, or how can we hook the reader?

- **Thesis Statement** (the “so what” of your paper – why does this matter/what are you arguing? 1-2 sentences):

Body

The number of body paragraphs will depend upon what kind of essay, article, or report you’re writing. Decide what you will need to include based upon the requirements given to you by your instructor. How many main points do you feel it will take to convey your topic thoroughly and within the parameters given?

- **Main Point/Topic Sentence**
 - **Evidence to support your point/topic:**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

- ***Main Point/Topic Sentence***

- **Evidence to support your point/topic:**

a.

b.

c.

- ***Main Point/Topic Sentence***

- **Evidence to support your point/topic:**

a.

b.

c.

Conclusion

Despite the common adage that your conclusion is the thesis, only reworded, your conclusion is there to wrap your paper up. Rather than simply rewording your thesis, consider tying things together and telling your reader why this matters.

a.

b.

For more information on basic writing outlines, make an appointment with a [writing tutor](#). Appointments are available in person at the [Student Success Center](#) or online.