



Research Essay Outline

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:

- Clearly show the relationships between ideas in your essay and provide a plan for writing.
- Help you to consider your topic and to synthesize and reflect on your proposed plan.
- Help you to determine whether you have researched a topic thoroughly enough.
- 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).
- 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
 - i. An organizational overview of the essay (if appropriate)
- II. Body
 - a. Literature review
 - i. Synthesize, rather than summarize, your source material
 - ii. Describe how your research will fit into the academic conversation presented
 - b. Method and Analysis (What was done)
 - i. Description of the scope of the analysis
 - ii. Methods used for first major task
 - iii. Methods used for second major task
 - iv. Methods used for third major task
 - c. Results (What was found) [Note: Sometimes this section is combined with Discussion]
 - i. Results of first major task
 - ii. Results of second major task
 - iii. Results of third major task

- d. Discussion (How your results contribute to knowledge in the field)
 - i. Example: compare results to literature reviewed
 - ii. 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)

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

Adapted from the Cambridge Centre for International Research.