

# **How To Make An Outline For Your Research Paper**

## **Mrs. Hunsley-Hunt     American Lit.**

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper. Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION. Make the first outline tentative. It isn't the final outline, but it gives you *something* to work from when you start to write your paper.

**INTRODUCTION** - State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper clearly. What is the chief reason you are writing the paper? State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a factual report, a book review, a comparison, or an analysis of a problem? Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover in your paper and why readers should be interested in your topic.

**BODY** - This is where you present your arguments to support your thesis statement. Remember the **Rule of 3**, i.e. find 3 supporting arguments for each position you take. Begin with a strong argument, then use a stronger one, and end with the strongest argument for your final point.

**CONCLUSION** - Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.

**REMEMBER** – This is not a personal statement or a narrative paper. No where in your paper will you refer to yourself as I. With this assignment, you really shouldn't even refer to yourself at all.

### **Here is a good sample outline about the author William Shakespeare.**

**I. INTRODUCTION - (Brief comment leading into subject matter -  
Thesis statement on Shakespeare)**

**II. BODY - Shakespeare's Early Life, Marriage, Works, Later Years**

**A. Early life in Stratford**

**1. Shakespeare's family**

**a. Shakespeare's father**

**b. Shakespeare's mother**

**2. Shakespeare's marriage**

**a. Life of Anne Hathaway**

**b. Reference in Shakespeare's Poems**

**B. Shakespeare's works**

**1. Plays**

**a. Tragedies**

**i. Hamlet**

**ii. Romeo and Juliet**

**b. Comedies**

**i. The Tempest**

**ii. Much Ado About Nothing**

**c. Histories**

**i. King John**

**ii. Richard III**

**iii. Henry VIII**

**2. Sonnets**

**3. Other poems**

**C. Shakespeare's Later Years**

**1. Last two plays**

**2. Retired to Stratford**

**a. Death**

**b. Burial**

**i. Epitaph on his tombstone**

**III. CONCLUSION**

**A. Analytical summary**

**1. Shakespeare's early life**

**2. Shakespeare's works**

**3. Shakespeare's later years**

**B. Thesis reworded**

**C. Concluding statement**

**Here is another example of an outline to follow.**

**Outline for Writing a Research Paper**

I. Introduction- begin with Thesis Statement: In one clear sentence state the focus of your paper.

- A. Key points (have at least three, but no more than five)
  - 1. state each main point that you'll be making in the paper
  - 2. main point
  - 3. main point
  - 4. main point
  - 5. main point

II. Body of paper- outline the topic sentence and supporting research for each point you'll be covering in the paper, beginning with point #1 stated in the introduction.

- A. Point 1- topic sentence idea
  - 1. research concept
    - a. supporting idea(s)
    - b. connect to next concept
  - 2. research concept
    - a. supporting idea(s)
    - b. connect to next concept
  - 3. research concept
    - a. supporting idea(s)
    - b. connect to next topic idea

- B. Point 2- topic sentence idea
  - 1. research concept
    - a. supporting idea(s)
    - b. connect to next concept
  - 2. research concept CONTINUE FORMAT
  - 3. “ “

C. Point 3- topic sentence idea and CONTINUE FORMAT

D. Point 4- topic sentence idea and CONTINUE FORMAT

E. Point 5- topic sentence idea and CONTINUE FORMAT

- 1.
- 2.
- 3. after last point is made and supported, create a transition to summary and conclusion

III. Summary paragraph- create a key summary sentence that declares a wrap-up of concepts to begin this paragraph

- A. Follow the summary sentence with clear sentences that summarize each of the main ideas that have been discussed in the body of the paper
  - 1. summary of point 1
  - 2. summary of point 2
  - 3. summary of point 3
  - 4. summary of point 4
  - 5. summary of point 5

IV. Conclusion- transition to the ending of your paper and final thoughts in a paragraph

V. Reference page in alphabetical order by last name