

Kenyon's WCC Presents: *Outlining Ideas - A Means of Organizing Your Thoughts*

This handout covers two outline styles that MIGHT help you complete your final draft. These suggestions are for those writers who find themselves not getting to the organizational point they desire or who need to move past the Five Paragraph essay format. Note that for outlines you do not need to write in complete sentences and can just jot down your ideas quickly!

Option I: The "A then B" Outline

I. Introduction:

1. Follow the genre conventions of your course's discipline. Should you include the author's name(s)? Should you include the titles of the sources you are citing? Make sure to provide background information about your topic according to what your professor has specified.¹
2. Craft a clear thesis statement on which to end your introduction.
 - i. Here you will rely on genre conventions. Is it an argumentative essay? If so, your thesis needs to take a stance on the argument **or** it needs to make its own argument.
 - ii. Is it a research paper? Then your thesis will share what the main focus of your paper is. Ask your professor for examples if you get stuck!

II. Body Paragraph I ... On the One Hand - share an idea:

1. Begin with Topic Sentence or idea which involves a specific connection to your thesis
 - i. Example:
 - I. Thesis: Jones's essay has some weak points when it comes to his message.
 - II. Topic Sentence: The logos isn't strong, his message is hard to follow.
2. Find evidence to support your topic sentence:
 - i. Example: Multiple illogical claims including the idea that the Earth is flat.
3. Consider how you might analyze the evidence:
 - i. Example: Jones doesn't have credible, researched evidence supporting his claim.
4. Conclude and transition to next paragraph:
 - i. Example: Because of unreliable evidence Jones isn't appealing to the audience's logical interest in the subject.

III. Move to your next paragraph: as you do, think about using key transition words and phrases: furthermore, however, conversely, moreover, on the other hand...

IV. Body Paragraph II ... On the Other Hand - share a different idea:

1. Begin with another critique or piece of praise
 - i. Example: The author appealed to the audience's emotions.

¹ If she, he, or they have not specified, please make sure to attend their, her, or his office hours

2. Find evidence to support this next claim:
 - i. Example: As evidenced by his use of the story about the ship that disappeared, the author wanted the audience to feel sympathy.
3. Conclude and transition to next paragraph:
 - i. Example: Because of his personal, heart-wrenching stories, readers are able to feel the emotion of this piece.

V. Repeat parts II and IV for body paragraphs all the way until the conclusion!

VI. Conclusion:

1. Make sure to explain *why* what you shared is important. Maybe it's interesting, maybe it's new or surprising information, whatever the case, tell your readers *why* you went through all the trouble of writing this essay. For now, you can just jot down bullet points.
 - i. Example: disproving the earth is flat; focusing on rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos); sharing that some people still think earth is flat even though it's not.
 2. Note that sometimes conclusions will vary a bit from discipline to discipline, always check with your professor about their specifications for a conclusion!
 - i. You can also come to the writing center to have a tutor look over your entire paper, conclusion included, and get advice from tutors in the know!
-

Option II: The Compare/Contrast Outline

I. Introduction

1. Follow the genre conventions of your course's discipline. Should you include the author's name(s)? Should you include the titles of the sources you are citing? Make sure to provide background information about your topic according to what your professor has specified.²
2. Craft a clear thesis statement on which to end your introduction.
 - i. Again, here, you will rely on genre conventions.
 1. Is it an argumentative essay? If so, your thesis probably needs to take a stance or position on the argument or it needs to make its own argument.
 2. Is it a research paper? Then your thesis will share what the main focus of your paper is. Ask your professor for examples if you get stuck!

II. Body Paragraph I

1. Begin with something that the text(s) or argument you're responding to does well as compared to something it/ they do(es) poorly

² If she, he, or they have not specified, please make sure to attend their, her, or his office hours and ask! Another good clue is to look at the citation style you're expected to use. APA, for example, does not generally want full author names so as to avoid gendered biases. APA then only has you put the first initial of each other on your References page. MLA, on the other hand, generally prefers full author names both in your paper and on your Works Cited Page.

- i. Example: Johnson does a poor job focusing on logos; however, she does a stellar job articulating pathos
 1. Find evidence to support your claims
 - a. Example: Johnson's piece about caring for the elderly emphasizes her respect for the previous generation but alienates anyone who did not have a positive experience with older patients.
 2. Conclude and transition to the next paragraph
 - a. Example: The author over all makes the audience understand her emotional appeal but she must work more on her logic for readers to agree with her.
 3. Keep in mind that for the evidence you're going to use, you should always be as specific as possible when describing the evidence AND citing it. If your professor or discipline does not allow for direct quotations, paraphrase clearly what evidence you're sharing. If it does allow for these types of quotations, use them. In either situation, make sure to analyze your evidence to have a strong, well-organized essay.
- III. Repeat for body paragraphs as you make each point about the text(s) on which you're basing your paper. Rotate between things done well and things done poorly so as to provide the comparison (well) and contrast (poorly/ different).
- IV. Conclusion
1. Make sure to explain *why* what you shared is important. Maybe it's interesting, maybe it's new or surprising information, whatever the case, tell your readers *why* you went through all the trouble of writing this essay. For now, you can just jot down bullet points.
 - i. Example: disproving the earth is flat; focusing on rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos); sharing that some people still think earth is flat even though it's not.
 2. Note that sometimes conclusions will vary a bit from discipline to discipline, always check with your professor about their specifications for a conclusion!
 - i. You can also come to the writing center to have a tutor look over your entire paper, conclusion included, and get advice from tutors in the know!

Resources:

- Purdue's Online Writing Lab (commonly referred to as the OWL@Purdue) offers excellent outlining tips.
- We also have additional handouts on outlining, thesis statements, and conclusions. Email scanlon1@kenyon.edu for a copy!

Citation Information:

Prof. Scanlon compiled this document; she updated it September 2022 to be more accessible. If you notice an error, need it in a different format, or have further questions or concerns, please email her at scanlon1@kenyon.edu or stop by and visit one of our tutors in Chalmers library!