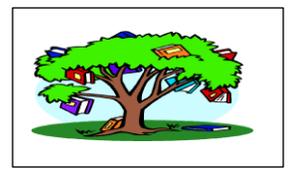


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



Outlining Your Essay

An **outline** is a logical arrangement of ideas with four main characteristics:

1. **Division:** Every major point should have at least two sub-points, which may be divided further
2. **Coordination:** Items on the same level (*I, II, and III* or *A, B, and C*) carry the same weight.
3. **Subordination:** Major headings should be general; minor headings should be more specific.
4. **Parallel Structure:** Items within a single list should be of the same type (e.g., all sentences)

Tips for Outlining:

- **Plan ahead** before researching and writing. Keep your end goal in mind.
- The formation of a **thesis** will guide the outline's construction.
- An outline shows the **relationships** between ideas and the relative **importance** of support

Typical Essay Structure:

- I. **Introduction:** This section should build up to a specific thesis.
 - A. Capture the reader's **attention** with one or two of the following:
 1. A brief story (*anecdote*)
 2. A relevant quote
 3. An interesting fact or figure
 4. A question in need of an answer
 - B. Provide any **background** information necessary to understand the issue at hand.
 - C. Communicate your main idea in a clear, concise **thesis statement**.
- II. **Body:** In a short essay, this is typically three or four paragraphs.
 - A. Begin each paragraph with a clear **topic sentence**, which explains, supports, or justifies one aspect of the idea expressed in the thesis.
 - B. **Support** your claims with explanation, examples, and evidence.
 - C. Provide smooth **transitions** from one paragraph to the next.
- III. **Conclusion:** This is the mirror image of your introduction.
 - A. **Recap.** Summarize key points and provide the insight on your thesis
 - B. Provide **closure**. Give the reader something to think about. This may be:
 - ✚ A piece of advice
 - ✚ A significant lesson to be learned
 - ✚ A call to action
 - ✚ A relevant prediction
 - ✚ An unanswered question to be explored further