

The Outline

Description:

The outline is a framework to structure the text. Ideas need to be organized after being gathered. The ideas are organized into an outline that will eventually become the structure of the paper.

Goals:

- To **organize the ideas and arguments** in a logical manner;
- To focus the research;
- To avoid gathering irrelevant information;
- To follow the thesis statement;
- To provide a framework for the assignment.

The Preliminary Outline

The preliminary outline is the first organization of the ideas.

Preparing a preliminary outline:

- Step 1:** Take the ideas that have been gathered from the brainstorming session;
- Step 2:** Group the ideas together logically;
- Step 3:** Identify (and label) the main and secondary ideas;
- Step 4:** Organize the main ideas in a logical order.

What does it mean to organize the ideas in a “logical order”?

There are several different methods of organizing the ideas into an order:

- Chronological Order:
 - In the order of how the events occurred;
 - Past, present and future considerations;
 - From the least to most important;
- General to Specific:
 - From the least known facts to the most known facts;
 - From the theory to the practical;
- Advantages and Disadvantages;
- Similarities and Differences;
- Causes to Effects.

Main Outline:

Once the research has been completed, it might be necessary to re-work the preliminary outline.

- *Too much information* found on the topic can mean that the thesis statement needs to be narrowed down further;
- *Not enough information* found can mean that the topic and the thesis statement need to be re-evaluated because there is not enough material available for discussion.

The outline creates a framework for the structure of the paper:

