

# Topic Outline

# Writing a Topic Outline

- A topic outline arranges your ideas hierarchically (showing which are main and which are sub-points), in the sequence you want, and shows what you will talk about. As the name implies, it identifies all the little mini-topics that your paper will comprise, and shows how they relate.
- A topic outline lists words or phrases.
- As in any outline, remember that a division or subdivision cannot be divided into one part; therefore, if there is an "A" there must be a "B," and if there is a "1" there must be a "2."
- Also, the wording within each division must be parallel.
- An outline is a "blueprint" or "plan" for your paper. It helps you to organize your thoughts and arguments. A good outline can make conducting research and then writing the paper very efficient. A good outline makes writing easier and more efficient.

# Your outline page must include

**your:**

- Paper title
- Major points/arguments indicated by Roman numerals (i.e., I, II, III, IV, V, etc.)
- Support for your major points, indicated by capital Arabic numerals (i.e., A, B, C, D, E, etc.)
- Example:

## I. First level (main heading)

### A. Second level

#### 1. Third level

#### 2. Third level

##### a. Fourth level

##### b. Fourth level

### B. Second level

## II. First level (main heading)

# Factors to Consider in Writing an Outline

- The type of outline that should be used depend on these; the length of your paper and the complexity of your material, to name only two. When preparing to write a long paper which presents a lot of material and complex issues, you might like to make a complete sentence outline that maps out every detail of your argument and its evidence. If you are going to do a short, relatively uncomplicated paper, perhaps a brief topic outline would be sufficient. Not the least important factor in your choice of outline is your own preference. What type of outline do you feel most comfortable with?

# An Effective Outline

- See that all the parts of the outline are there-- main headings, and subordinate headings.
- Use the proper outline form.
- Make your outline reasonably specific, particularly in your main headings (I, II, III, etc.).
- Check the outline for logic. Do all the parts fit together? Does every supporting point firmly fit your thesis?
- Check the outline for the proper order-that is, for a sensible sequence or organization of ideas.

# Example of a Topic

## I. Family Problems **Outline**

- A. Custodial: Non-custodial Conflicts
- B. Extended Family
- C. Adolescent's Age

## II. Economic Problems

- A. Child Support
- B. Women's Job Training
- C. Lower Standard of Living
- D. Possible Relocation
  - 1. Poorer Neighborhood
  - 2. New School

## III. Peer Problems

- A. Loss of Friends
- B. Relationships with Dates

## Exercise

Make your own topic  
outline about a certain  
topic.

# Reference

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- ❑ <https://app.shoreline.edu/doldham/102/HTML/Topic%20to%20Sentence.html>
- ❑ <http://www.austincc.edu/tmthomas/sample%20outline%201.htm>
- ❑ [http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/con&com\\_databank/writing/outlines.htm](http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/con&com_databank/writing/outlines.htm)
- ❑ [https://www.oakton.edu/student-services/learning\\_center/tutoring/research\\_paper\\_tips/topic\\_outline.php](https://www.oakton.edu/student-services/learning_center/tutoring/research_paper_tips/topic_outline.php)