



## Structuring and outlining your paper

## Classic essay paper outline

- Different paper contexts will shape the structure (IR versus anthropology versus chemistry, for example)
  - Title
  - Introduction
  - Body
    - Start to explore the issue
    - Continue to explore and develop the issue
    - Identify extra dimensions within the issue
    - Clarify the heart of the issue
  - Conclusion
  - References

Godfrey, 2011

## Classic/ alternative research paper outline

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Title</li><li>• Abstract</li><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Theory / propositions</li><li>• Methods</li><li>• Results</li><li>• Discussion</li><li>• Conclusions (and speculations)</li><li>• References</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Title</li><li>• Abstract</li><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Theory / propositions</li><li>• Methods</li><li>• Theme1 – analysis</li><li>• Theme 2 – analysis</li><li>• Theme 3 - analysis</li><li>• Synthesis</li><li>• Conclusions (and speculations)</li><li>• References</li></ul> |
|--|---|

Lebel, 2012

## Outlining

- Outlining helps us ensure a clear narrative running through the article, and logical argument development
- State your purpose
  - This will give you focus
  - Can cut text and arguments that do not contribute towards your purpose (helps meet the word limit)
- Drafting an outline of the paper means to work through the details of each section in more detail
  - What will be the headings/ subheadings of each section
  - What will be the topic and main message of each paragraph?
  - What are the key citations (if any) for each paragraph?

## Example

### Example Outline

*The following outline is for a 5-7 page paper discussing the link between educational attainment and health. Review the other sections of this page for more detailed information about each component of this outline!*

#### I. Introduction

**A. Current Problem:** Educational attainment rates are decreasing in the United States while healthcare costs are increasing.

**B. Population/Area of Focus:** Unskilled or low-skilled adult workers

**C. Key Terms:** healthy, well-educated

**Thesis Statement:** *Because of their income deficit (cite sources) and general susceptibility to depression (cite sources), students who drop out of high school before graduation maintain a higher risk for physical and mental health problems later in life.*

#### II. Background

**A. Historical Employment Overview:** Unskilled laborers in the past were frequently unionized and adequately compensated for their work (cite sources).

**B. Historical Healthcare Overview:** Unskilled laborers in the past were often provided adequate healthcare and benefits (cite sources).

**C. Current Link between Education and Employment Type:** Increasingly, uneducated workers work in unskilled or low-skilled jobs (cite sources).

**D. Gaps in the Research:** Little information exists exploring the health implications of the current conditions in low-skilled jobs.

<http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/writingprocess/outlining>

## Example

### III. Major Point 1: Conditions of employment affect workers' physical health.

**A. Minor Point 1:** Unskilled work environments are correlated highly with worker injury (cite sources).

**B. Minor Point 2:** Unskilled work environments rarely provide healthcare or adequate injury recovery time (cite sources).

### IV. Major Point 2: Conditions of employment affect workers' mental health

**A. Minor Point 1:** Employment in a low-skilled position is highly correlated with dangerous levels of stress (cite sources).

**B. Minor Point 2:** Stress is highly correlated with mental health issues (cite sources).

### V. Major Point 3: Physical health and mental health correlate directly with one another.

**A. Minor Point 1:** Mental health problems and physical health problems are highly correlated (cite sources).

**B. Minor Point 2:** Stress manifests itself in physical form (cite sources)

### VI. Major Point 4: People with more financial worries have more stress and worse physical health.

**A. Minor Point 1:** Many high-school dropouts face financial problems (cite sources).

**B. Minor Point 2:** Financial problems are often correlated with unhealthy lifestyle choices such as unhealthy food choices, overconsumption/abuse of alcohol, chain smoking, abusive relationships, etc. (cite sources).

<http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/writingprocess/outlining>

## Example

### VII. Conclusion

**A. Restatement of Thesis:** Students who drop out of high school are at a higher risk for both mental and physical health problems throughout their lives.

**B. Next Steps:** Society needs educational advocates; educators need to be aware of this situation and strive for student retention in order to promote healthy lifestyles and warn students of the risks associated with dropping out of school.

<http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/writingprocess/outlining>

## Next session

- 15 min [Individual work]:
  - Review your conference paper.
  - Look at the flow of headings and sub-headings?
    - What is the logic? Could it be revised? What will you change?
  - Look at the flow of paragraphs
    - What is the logic? Could it be revised? What will you change?
- 45 min [Group work] Summarize your introduction to the group for "critical friend" feedback