

Using Outlines

How can outlining help me write my paper?

Using both informal and formal outlines can help writers organize their ideas in a logical manner *before* they begin writing. Outlines can help writers determine whether

- they have enough information about a particular topic to fit the page length
- if their ideas are actually proving or related to their thesis
- if there are gaps in their research or supporting ideas, as well as helping with transitioning between ideas.

Referring to an outline as one writes a paper also helps the writer stay on topic, and can make the concept of a paper, particularly when the paper is rather long in length, seem less overwhelming.

Two types of outlines are...

These look like...

⇒ Informal Outlining

Informal outlining is a way to organize your ideas in the beginning stages of the writing process; thus, it is very flexible and easily changed to accommodate new ideas. Begin by writing the working thesis and then listing the ideas you plan to include to support your thesis. Another way to do this is to highlight or number ideas you may have included in a freewrite.

Working Thesis: *Stricter gun control is a must in our society today.*

- Guns too easy to obtain
- Handgun licensing needed
- Kids fear shot
- Teens kill with guns 97% of time
- Owning gun decreases safety
- Second Amendment refers to militia

⇒ Formal Outlining

Formal outlines can help you organize a rough draft, especially if the subject of the paper is complex. If your professor asks for a formal outline, it must meet specific guidelines:

- Begin with the thesis statement
- Use parallel grammatical structures for each level
- In general, use complete sentences.
- Each level must have at least two levels; such as, *A. must have a B.*
- Follow the example shown on the opposing side for the appropriate numbers and letters for each level of the outline.

Thesis statement:

- I.
 - A.
 - B.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - a.
 - b.
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (a)
 - (b)
- II.

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⇒ Formal Outline Example

Thesis: The call for stricter gun control policies is a must in our society today.

- I. Guns are one of the leading causes of violence in the United States today.
 - A. Guns are too easily obtained for any reason, by any person.
 1. The United States is one of the easiest countries in which to purchase firearms.
 - a. In 24 states, anyone who is 18 or older can walk into a store, fill out a form, and leave with a gun.
 - b. The Brady Bill has not gone far enough.
 2. The United States has an estimated 211 million firearms in circulation.
 - a. Of these, 70 million are handguns.
 - b. One in every two households contains a gun.
 - B. Gun violence occurs in our streets, schoolyards, and workplaces.
- II. Laws should be passed, requiring gun owners to be licensed in the same way car drivers are licensed.
 - A. Obtaining a license would require a background check, fingerprinting, and passing a firearms training course.
 - B. Gun purchases should be limited to one a month.
 - C. Stiff penalties should be enacted for stealing a gun.
 - D. Gun dealers should also be licensed
 1. They should be required to have background checks.
 2. They should pay an annual fee of \$3000 to operate a gun business.
- III. Young children and teens are desensitized to our gun culture.
 - A. In some neighborhoods, many of the children expect to die violently, probably by a gunshot.
 - B. Even though we live in the world's richest, strongest, freest nation, our children do not have the freedom to believe that one day they will be adults.
- IV. People are afraid that everyone else has a gun, so they buy one themselves, for protection.
 - A. Guns in the home are five times more likely to kill a resident of the home than an intruder to the home.
 - B. Having a gun in the home makes the home less safe, not more safe.
- V. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is used to support gun control opponents.
 - A. This Amendment does not guarantee everyone the right to bear arms.
 - B. The Supreme Court has ruled that this Amendment guarantees that states have the right to organize militias.
- VI. The National Rifle Association is one of the richest, most powerful lobbies in the country.
 - A. The NRA asserts that "guns don't kill people; people kill people."
 - B. The NRA claims that gun laws will take guns from law-abiding citizens and leave guns in the hands of criminals.
 1. This is a scare tactic because no legislation has been proposed to take guns from serious hunters.
 2. Anyone who has a handgun in the home is a potential criminal because, if a child gets the gun and hurts or even kills someone, the parent(s) should be held responsible.
- VII. Owning a gun is no longer a necessity for feeding and protecting citizens, and uncontrolled gun sales have led us to even less safety, as a result. Therefore, stricter gun control laws are essential to the development of a society less frustrated by the fear of gun violence.

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