

Creating an Outline

An outline helps you arrange the order of ideas in a paper. Many students eliminate outlining in the writing process as an unnecessary step. However, writing an essay without an outline can create disjointed results. An outline provides a roadmap so that the essay can move smoothly from point A to point B to point C. Without an outline, the essay could easily become disorganized, e.g., A, B, A, C, B. This can confuse readers because the points of the essay are not arranged in an organized or logical sequence. Use the following suggestions to create an effective outline.

Creating Correct Formatting

While there are different ways to create an outline, the following information will help you format a traditional Roman numeral outline format:

- Include at least *two* elements under each of the sections in the outline. If you have only one element, however, you can add additional information to create at least two points.
- Create parallel wording at the beginning of each section of the outline. If the first word begins with a noun, the first words in all other elements in that section must also begin with nouns. If the first word is a verb, the other elements must begin with verbs, etc.
- Include a period, and space or tab after each letter or number. Be consistent on using spaces or tabs throughout. (See the [sample outline](#) below.)
- Use double spacing in the outline for ease in reading *or* use single spacing throughout and double space between each of the major elements (I, II, II).
- Capitalize the first word after each number or letter in the outline. Also capitalize proper nouns, but do not capitalize the other words.

Sample Outline

Use the following as a model to create your outline. If directions from your instructor differ from the explanations and example here, follow the guidelines of your instructor.

Philosophy of Adult Education

- I. Introduction
- II. Primary purpose for education
 - A. Acquisition of knowledge
 - B. Skills development
 - 1. Job training
 - 2. Technological advancement
 - C. Intrinsic motivation
 - D. Development of social relationships
 - E. Career advancement
 - F. Social change
 - 1. Paulo Freire
 - a. Liberating force of education
 - b. Community change and support
 - 2. John Dewey
 - a. Students as “agents of change”
 - b. Integrated learning
- III. Adult learning style
 - A. Self-motivation
 - 1. Internal rewards
 - 2. Self-direction in learning
 - B. Previous experiences
 - C. Learning activities

1. Meaningful
2. Collaboration

IV. Conclusion

This sample outline represents the most common outline format. Faculty standards for outlines submitted for a grade may vary. The faculty member's own standards will prevail if the standards differ from this sample. *June 2020*