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## Preparing an Outline

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### What is an Outline?

- **Before you begin writing the first draft of your essay, it is best to make an outline. An outline is a general plan of what you are going to write.**
- **You can compare making an outline to drawing plans to build a house. Before one begins to build a house, it is best to draw up plans to make sure that a house is built in the way you want.**
- **The same is true with writing an essay and making an outline.**

An outline is a part of the writing process called “Pre-Writing.” It is a list that outlines all of the information that you would like to include in your paper. The list helps you to put all of your information in order before you begin writing.

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## The Benefits of an Outline

**An outline of an essay can be very helpful for two reasons:**

- **An outline will help make your essay more organized. A careful plan will help your body paragraphs stay focused on the ideas in your thesis statement.**
- **An outline saves time for writers. Preparing an outline can take time, but when you are finished, you will be able to write the rough draft of your essay more quickly than if you didn't have an outline.**

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## Example

This is an example of how a blank outline might look:

**Essay Outline**

I. Introduction      Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

II. Body Paragraph #1- Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
    A. supporting idea  
    B. supporting idea

III. Body Paragraph #2- Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
    A. supporting idea  
    B. supporting idea

IV. Body Paragraph #3- Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
    A. supporting idea  
    B. supporting idea

V. Conclusion

**Your Thesis Statement**-The sentence that tells your reader your ultimate point and what they should expect.

**Your Major Points**-The facts that you are using to prove your main point.

**Your Supporting Details**-The examples, facts, quotations, etc. that further explain and back up each major point. You should have several for each Major Point.

Do not forget transitions-The statement or information you will use to transition from one major point to the next. This stops your paper from sounding jumpy or disorganized.

**Concluding Thoughts**-Any thoughts that you would like to include at the close of your paper to wrap things up and tie it all together. Never include new facts or information in your conclusion.

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**The Process**  
**Making an Outline**

**In a formal outline, Roman numerals can be used to represent paragraphs. Capital letters can be used to represent supporting details for the paragraphs.**

Essay Outline	
I. Introduction	Thesis: _____
II. Body Paragraph #1- Topic Sentence:	_____
	A. supporting idea
	B. supporting idea
III. Body Paragraph #2- Topic Sentence:	_____
	A. supporting idea
	B. supporting idea
IV. Body Paragraph #3- Topic Sentence:	_____
	A. supporting idea
	B. supporting idea
V. Conclusion	

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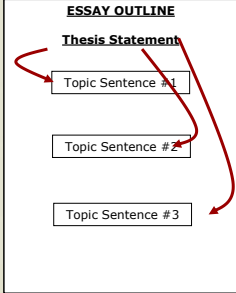
**How to Start**

1. Gather all of your research or notes on the topic that you are writing about.
2. Review it all and decide what your research/information is telling you about your topic.
3. Form a working thesis statement that describes the point that you want to make about your topic.
4. Begin to select what information you would like to include in your essay based on what proves your point.

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## The Process Thesis Statement

**To begin an outline, you need to start with your thesis statement. The thesis statement will be your guide throughout the process of writing your essay. From the thesis statement, you can begin writing the topic sentences for the body paragraphs in the outline.**



The diagram, titled "ESSAY OUTLINE", shows a "Thesis Statement" at the top. Below it are three boxes labeled "Topic Sentence #1", "Topic Sentence #2", and "Topic Sentence #3". Red arrows point from the Thesis Statement to each of the three Topic Sentences, indicating that the thesis statement guides the development of each body paragraph's topic sentence.

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## The Process Topic Sentences

**The topic sentence for each body paragraph should support the thesis statement. The topic sentences need to agree with the main idea or sub-points in the thesis statement; otherwise, the essay could be confusing.**

## The Process Topic Sentences

<p><b>Thesis Statement</b></p> <p>This paper examines three issues involving individual actions that could result in criminal charges. The charge of disorderly conduct is reviewed first along with two court cases that address that issue. Second, a case of two students who sent emails to government agencies that included threats to blow up a building in protest of government involvement in international issues. They were charged with threats to use weapons of mass destruction. In order to determine if the government will be successful in obtaining a conviction one courts case will be reviewed concerning similar charges. Part three is a review of the charge of escape and a court case dealing with that charge.</p>	<p><b>Topic Sentence Paragraph #1:</b></p> <p>The crime of disorderly conduct depends on the result of the actions of the individuals.</p>
	<p><b>Topic Sentence- Paragraph #2:</b></p> <p>The threat to use weapons of mass destruction can result in criminal charges even when no components of the weapon are found.</p>
	<p><b>Topic Sentence- Paragraph #3:</b></p> <p>The charge of escape can be used when an inmate is found in area where s/he is not authorized.</p>

## The Process Supporting Details

**Under the topic sentence for each paragraph list some of the supporting details, examples, or ideas you want to include in each paragraph.**

## The Process Supporting Details

**II. Body Paragraph #1:**

**Topic Sentence:** The crime of disorderly conduct depends on the result of the actions of the individuals.

supporting details,  
examples, and ideas

}

- A. The elements of disorderly conduct are...
- B. In *Edwards* (case brief)...
- C. In *Adderly* (case brief)...
- D. The charge of disorderly conduct is determined by result of the conduct.

## Example Outline

**I. Introduction- Thesis Statement:** This paper examines three issues involving individual actions that could result in criminal charges. The charge of disorderly conduct is reviewed first along with two court cases that address that issue. Second, a case of two students who sent emails to government agencies that included threats to blow up a building in protest of government involvement in international issues...

**II. Body Paragraph #1:**  
**Topic Sentence:** The crime of disorderly conduct depends on the result of the actions of the individuals.

- A. The elements of disorderly conduct are...
- B. In *Edwards* (case brief)...
- C. In *Adderly* (case brief)...
- D. The charge of disorderly conduct is determined by result of the conduct.

**III. Body Paragraph #2:**  
**Topic Sentence:** The threat to use weapons of mass destruction can result in criminal charges even when no components of the weapon are found.

- A. ....
- B. ....
- C. ....

**IV. Body Paragraph #3:**  
**Topic Sentence:** The charge of escape can be used when an inmate is found in area where s/he is not authorized.

- A. ....
- B. ....
- C. ....

**IV. Conclusion:** Don't forget to use a conclusion to wrap up your paper.

**V. References:** (Make sure you have your references listed)

Questions?

