

USING AN OUTLINE

An outline is a device for organizing writing. Using this tool may simplify the process of writing a unified, coherent essay. An outline presents the ideas for an essay. It helps you see what your essay will say when you have written all the parts.

In theme writing, the next step after selecting and limiting a topic is organizing the material. An outline consists of two parts--a thesis and a plan of development. The thesis is the main focus or central, controlling idea of the paper. The plan of development is the outline of the component ideas of the thesis. A sample outline format follows:

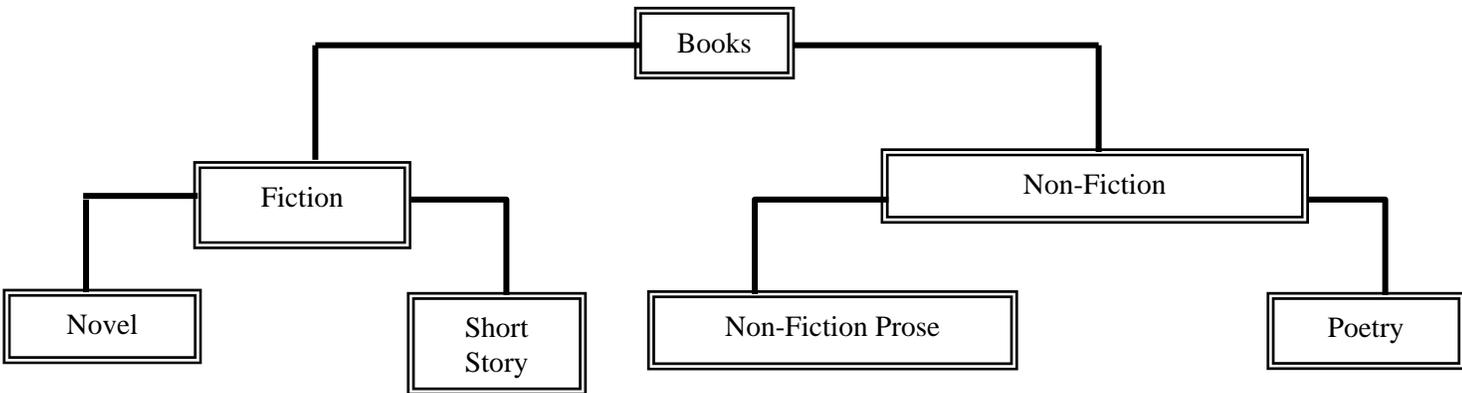
Thesis statement: _____ Why Thesis Is Valid	Reason 1: _____ Support A. _____ Support B. _____ Support C. _____ Reason 2: _____ Support A. _____ Support B. _____ Support C. _____ Reason 3: _____ Support A. _____ Support B. _____ Support C. _____	Thesis: Interscholar football should be discontinued at Jonestown High. Reason 1. Cost is prohibitive. Support A. School loses money on games. Support B. Cost of maintenance is high. Support C. Winning coach is paid premium salary. Reason 2. Scholarship is forced to take second place. Support A. Student's attention is focused on games. Support B. Students lose study time to pep rallies. Support C. Coaches seem more important than teachers. Reason 3. Football's effect on students is bad. Support A. Football builds wrong set of values. Support B. Students are placed in danger. Support C. Fights often erupt.
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Each reason you state should point to, relate to, support, and develop your thesis statement. By substituting your own information in the above skeleton, you may organize the component ideas that develop the thesis.

Part 1: ORDER

Almost anything can be placed in order. Most topics may be categorized into main ideas. The main ideas, which support the thesis statement of the essay, can also be categorized into supporting facts. Arranging the main and supporting facts can produce a well-organized theme.

For example, a book might be the topic for a paper, but books can be classified into the coordinate categories of fiction and non-fiction. These categories can be further categorized. Fiction might be divided into novels and short stories. Non-fiction might be divided into prose and poetry:



Part II: CONVENTIONS OF OUTLINING

Formulate a thesis statement and follow these steps:

Step 1: Determine the main ideas that support your thesis logically.

Example: Thesis statement: Central Idea (What your paper will be about.)

I. Main Idea (Support for your thesis.) _____

II. _____

III. _____

Step 2: Add supporting facts to your main ideas.

Example: Thesis statement: _____

I. _____

A. Supporting fact (Fact proving the main idea true.) _____

B. _____

C. _____

II. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

III. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Step 3: Add details or specifics to your supporting ideas if they require them.

Example: Thesis statement: _____

I. _____

A. _____

1. Details or specifics _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. _____

1. _____

2. _____

Part III: TYPES OF OUTLINES

Type 1: Topic Outline—After stating the thesis in a complete sentence, state its main and supporting ideas in phrases or single-word titles. Example:

Thesis Statement: Having Charlie for a roommate was quite an experience.

- I. "Taking care" of other's possessions
 - A. My \$90 coat
 - B. My former fiancée

- II. Financial matters
 - A. Internal Revenue Service
 - B. "Help Charlie" contributions

- III. Love of good health
 - A. Early rising
 - B. Fresh air

Type 2: Sentence Outline—The thesis and every idea in the plan of development are stated in complete sentences. Example:

Thesis Statement: Having Charlie for a roommate was quite an experience.

- I. Charlie "took care" of others' possessions.
 - A. He ripped off my \$90 sport coat.
 - B. He stole my fiancée.

- II. Charlie had a strange sense of financial matters.
 - A. The Internal Revenue Service was after him.
 - B. He collected weekly "Help Charlie" contributions.

- III. Charlie loved good health.
 - A. He always rose at 5:30 a.m.
 - B. He kept all the windows open.