



Outlining Tips

WHAT IS AN OUTLINE?

“An outline...is a list arranged to show hierarchical relationships...It is used to present the main points or topics of a given subject, often used as a rough draft or summary of the content of a document” (“Definitions for Outline”).

WHY SHOULD I OUTLINE?

“Creating outlines, whether formal or informal, can help you make sure your writing is focused and logical and can help you identify any gaps in your support”(Hacker and Sommers 11).

CHOOSING AN OUTLINE

INFORMAL

An informal outline is usually just a thesis and a list of major ideas.

It can be helpful when you are brainstorming to take those ideas, put them into an informal outline, and start crossing out or adding ideas and putting them in a logical order.

FORMAL

A formal outline is a multilevel list that contains topics and subtopic as well as support that a writer is planning to use in their essay.

“A formal outline can help you see whether the parts of your essay work together and whether your essay’s structure is logical” ((Hacker and Sommers 11).

Formal outlines can be very helpful for longer more complex essays. They help you see if your paragraphs flow in a logical order or if you need to reorganize. They can also help you see if you have support for all of your topics.

