

# Creating an Outline

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Before any great paper come an even greater outline. Having a way to keep thoughts organized is the most important part of the writing process. This document shows you one way to formulate a focused, effective, and organized paper outline.

## Introduction

**Writing is contextual.** Creative writing, business writing, and academic writing all require the writer to write for different reasons. In an academic paper, then, we need to **establish context, relevancy, and an argument** in the academic field.

## Context

Some parts that make up the context:

- Audience (who are you writing to?)
- Purpose (why are you writing the paper?)
- Assignment (what is the assignment?)
- And intent (what type of essay/writing is the paper?)

## Relevancy

Some parts that make up the relevancy:

- How is your paper important to people in your field?
- What conversations are already happening about your topic?
  - Is research guiding your paper? An observation? Are you addressing a gap in the research?
- How is your paper contributing to your field?

## Argument

Some parts that make up the argument:

- What am I arguing?
  - What is my stance on the idea?
    - How do I plan to prove my stance?
- If there many parts to your argument, what are they and how do they come together towards one overall point?

Below is an **example** of outlining an introduction.

1. Introduction - Establish context, relevancy, and argument (thesis... or what stance are you taking on a subject?) here..
  - a. What is the context of my essay topic?
  - b. How is my essay relevant to my field? To the conversations happening about my idea?
  - c. What am I arguing? What is my stance on the idea and how do I plan to prove my stance?



# Body

Our introduction established the context, relevancy, and argument of the paper. Next, we need to prove our argument in the body of the paper. What does an outline for the body look?

## The Five-Paragraph Essay

When writing an academic paper in college, stay away from the five paragraph essay outline. The five paragraph essay is useful in the beginning stages of learning to write, but most college papers require deeper thought, explanation, or analysis than a three paragraph body allows.

### Do this instead:

- Brainstorm the supporting details for your argument
- Make a bullet point for each supporting detail that proves your argument
- Under each bullet point, make additional bullets for
  - original thoughts about the detail
  - source quotes or ideas about the detail

Depending on the length of your paper, your outline may require more or less supporting evidence-- outline your paper accordingly. However, make sure that each piece of supporting evidence is **absolutely imperative** to your argument.

Below is an example of outlining an essay's body section.



1. First paragraph - Write your first paragraph here. Keep ideas visible below. Mark each idea off when they're incorporated into the paragraph by inserting a strikethrough(Alt+Shift+5). Once complete with all 3 ideas, and the paragraph is complete, move onto Para. 2 and so forth.
  - a. 1st point
    - i. Elaboration/Quote/Thoughts on the idea as they pertain to your paper topic
      1. Further elaboration (if necessary)
    - ii.
    - iii.
  - b. 2nd point
    - i.
    - ii.
    - iii.
  - c. 3rd point
    - i.
    - ii.
    - iii.
2. Second paragraph
  - a. etc.