

# Outlining

## Why should you use outlines?

Whether you are wading through the research process or salvaging a draft in trouble, outlines help you focus your thoughts and find an order to whatever you're working on. Although best reserved as a pre-writing tool, outlines can be used anytime during the writing process.

## Common Outlining Myths

Outlining wastes time.

You have to use complete sentences.

You must stick to an outline.

## Outlining Facts

Outlines aid in draft quality.

Multiple formats exist.

Outlines are guides not rigid templates.

## Occasions to Use Outlines

1. To organize ideas and research prior to beginning a paper
2. To determine if more research is needed
3. To see relationships between points
4. To check the organization of a paper
5. To reorganize a paper with too many ideas

## Types of Outlines

1. Scratch
2. Topic
3. Sentence
4. Paragraph

## Making an Outline

Outlines involve levels: Roman numeral, uppercase letters, numbers, and lowercase letters.

Each level has a more specific detail. This division or coordination progresses logically. Always use two elements, so wherever you have a I, you will have a II. Wherever you place an A, you must place a B. This continues until the 1 and 2 level.

### Dos

- I. Book Banning in Schools.
  - A. Fewer classics
    1. Shakespeare banned
      - a. Hughes quote
    2. *The Diary of Anne Frank* banned
      - a. Stratman paraphrase
  - B. Brainwashing in education
    1. *Fahrenheit 451* banned
      - a. Website quote
    2. 1984 banned
      - a. Paraphrase Hughes
- II. Book Banning & the Community

### Don'ts

- I. Book Banning in Schools
  - A. Fewer classics
    1. Shakespeare banned
    2. Hughes quote
    3. *The Diary of Anne Frank* banned
      - a. Stratman paraphrase
  - II. Brainwashing in education
    - A. *Fahrenheit 451* banned
    - B. Website quote
    - C. 1984 banned
    - D. Paraphrase Hughes
- III. Book Banning & the Community

# Sample Outlines

## Scratch Outline

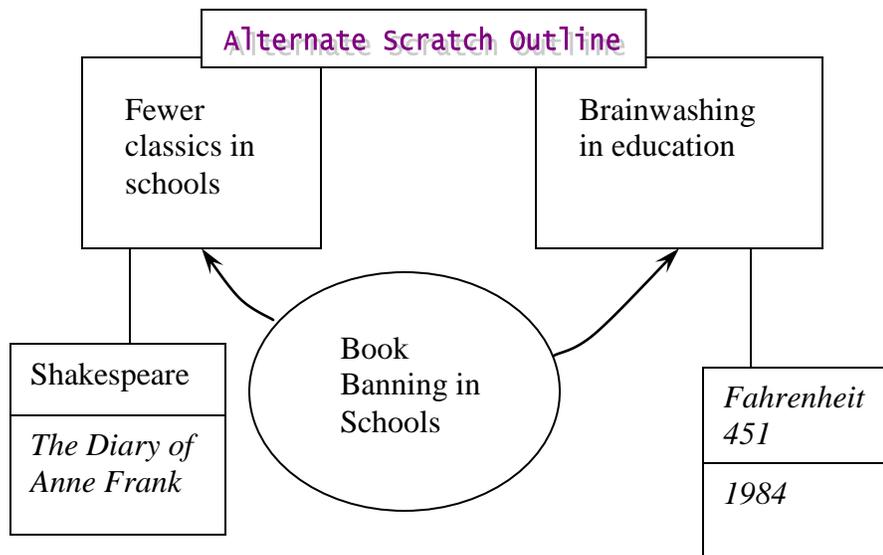
Book Banning in Schools

- Fewer Classics
  - Shakespeare
  - The Diary of Anne Frank*
- Brainwashing in Education
  - Fahrenheit 451*
  - 1984

Book Banning & the Community

## Topic Outline

- I. Book Banning in Schools
  - A. Fewer classics
    - 1. Shakespeare banned
      - a. Hughes quote
    - 2. *The Diary of Anne Frank* banned
      - a. Stratman paraphrase
  - B. Brainwashing in education
    - 1. *Fahrenheit 451* banned
      - a. Website quote
    - 2. 1984 banned
      - a. Paraphrase Hughes
- II. Book Banning & the Community



## Full Sentence Outline

- I. Today, book banning in schools increases every year.
  - A. With every banned book, students receive less reading instruction and have restricted access to classic literature.
    - 1. Frequently, Shakespeare becomes banned from schools because critics believe his plays possess too many sexual innuendos.
      - a. John Hughes, a concerned parent, argues, "...” (794).

Etc.

## Paragraph Outline

Introduction:

Paragraph 1: Today, book banning in schools increases every year. (Ex. Shakespeare, *Dairy*, *Fahrenheit*, 1984)

Paragraph 2: As censorship increases, community members lose public library diversity.

Etc.

# Script for Outlining

## Outlining Myths and Facts

People believe that outlining wastes time, but it actually saves time later and improves in draft quality. Many people, who do not outline, end up having to go back and restructure their essays. Outlining guides your writing and serves as a focus for your ideas. Although it is not for everyone, this part of the writing process is crucial if you know you have organizational errors.

In high school, most students were required to create full sentence outlines. These outlines can be tedious if they are not your preferred method of outlining. Today, we are going to go over four different types of outlines, including the full sentence variety, so you can learn about the choices available when organizing your ideas.

Frequently, people mistakenly believe that once you create an outline you can not change anything in your paper. This is never true. An outline is a signpost, but you can always ignore the directions. If you realize you need to add or remove sections of your essay as you write, do so. You control the writing process.

## Occasions to use outlines

If you decide to outline, you can use this writing strategy in several diverse ways as you compose. First, outlines help you to organize your ideas and research prior to beginning your first draft. They also allow you to see if more research is needed. If you do not have enough information to flush out an outline, you probably need to spend more time at the library. After you decide you have enough research, outlines can help you to assess the relationship between your points. Do you have two points that appear similar? Maybe these could be combined into one paragraph. Do you have two opposing ideas in the same paragraph? Maybe you need to move an idea to a different part of your paper or make sure you transition well from one point to another.

Outlines are not only used when beginning the writing process. They also can be of assistance after you have completed your first draft. Outlines can help you to check the organization of a draft or see if your essay could be improved by moving ideas around. If your draft has too many ideas or appears confusing to readers, an outline can assist you in finding your main ideas and restructuring them in a logical fashion.

## Making an Outline

Each level of an outline should contain an increasing amount of specific detail. For example, you would not want to use a quote on a line with a Roman numeral because the quote is too detailed to be considered a topic sentence of your paragraph. As you fill in each level, you will not always have two points, but this should not occur until you reach the level of 1 and 2. If you cannot reach this point in the outline, you need more information or need to reconsider the organization of your idea.

## Types of Outlines

Although countless forms of outlining exist, four different types fulfill most student needs. Now, before we go over this, let me stress that an outline does not have to match one of these forms perfectly. If you draw circles around each level where I put a Roman numeral, it does not matter. Create outlines that best suit your purposes.

## The Scratch Outline

This outline is usually used when you need an outline in a hurry. During essays tests, these outlines allow you to organize your ideas without spending vast amounts of time on structure. These outlines also work for short papers, as in fewer than two pages. Typically, instead of using a formal structure, students underline the main point or draw circles around their main ideas, and they may also use other symbols to distinguish details or examples of their ideas. Scratch outlines do not have to resemble the formal topic, sentence, or paragraph outlines. They can be as simple as the drawing you see in the middle of the page.

### The Topic Outline

This is the most commonly used outline. Although this type possesses the formal numeric and alphabetical structures, each line contains only a few brief words to guide the writer during the drafting process. These outlines are perfect for papers of all sizes and can be adapted easily if needed.

### The Full Sentence Outline

This outline comes with a bad reputation. When people think of this outline, they usually picture a monstrosity large outline they had to write in high school and that took forever. Please, do not associate horrible things with this outline form. This type of outline is best reserved for completed drafts. Although it can be used when getting started, writers have to spend significant time on this stage of the writing process. This form is ideal for checking organization in a finished draft. If you begin applying the Roman numerals to your paper and you cannot reach the 1 and 2 level, then, you will see points of weakness in your draft.

### The Paragraph Outline

This is the most unknown outline form. It is reserved for completed drafts and allows writers to check their paragraph organization. This works great for narrative papers or for papers when you have a substantial number of dates to keep straight. This outline can be constructed two different ways. The first is to record your topic sentences, as seen here, and you can see the relationship between your main ideas. An alternative option is to write a one sentence summary of each paragraph, so you will be able to see if your ideas come together.

Remember. There is not one correct form of outlining. Use whichever form suits your needs and the occasion, but after showing you about the different types of outlines, we hope you will assess how you begin the writing process. If you have any questions about outlines or any other part of the writing process, contact the Writing Center. Our number is 816-235-1146.