

OUTLINING

Outlining is an organizational skill that will develop your ability to think in a clear and logical manner. An outline can help you synthesize the most important information in a paragraph or essay. The information in the outline is a quick check on whether the paragraph or essay is unified, well supported, and well organized.

- I. Outlines have two basic characteristics.
 - A. They are accurate summaries of information.
 - B. They are organized to show how ideas are related.
- II. Outlines follow a special format.
 - A. They begin with a title which states the topic.
 - B. All statements must be labeled.
 - 1. Roman numerals are used to label main ideas.
 - 2. Capital letters are used to label major supporting sentences.
 - 3. Arabic numerals are used to label minor supports.
 - C. All labels must be used in pairs and must be followed by a period.
 - 1. If a I is used, a II must be used.
 - 2. If an A is used, a B must be used.
 - 3. If a 1 is used, a 2 must be used.
- III. Making an outline has two advantages.
 - A. The outline synthesizes the most important information of a paragraph or essay for the reader or listener.
 - 1. The outline can be helpful when taking notes from a textbook.
 - 2. The outline format can make taking lecture notes simple.
 - B. The outline provides the important information the writer wants to include in his paragraph or essay.
 - 1. The outline can be helpful when beginning to write because it lists the main points to be developed.
 - 2. Developing an outline point by point helps the writer to adequately support each point.

SIX STEPS TO BUILD OUTLINING PROFICIENCY

Step One: Understand the difference between the topic and major thoughts.

All information must be organized around a general topic.

Exercise A

1. Read the list of items.
2. Determine what should be the main topic for each list.
3. Write the topic on the line provided.

1. Symptoms of the flu
Headache
Runny nose
Fever
Chills

2. _____
Wood
Oil
Gas
kerosene

3. _____
Arm
Wrist
Ankle
Toe

4. _____
Lincoln
Reagan
Jefferson
Roosevelt

Step Two: Understand the main idea

The main idea is the central idea which ties a paragraph or list of items together. The topic usually becomes the title of the outline. Once the topic is identified, the main ideas must be labeled with Roman numerals. In paragraph only one main idea will be present. When outlining a paragraph, a single Roman numeral I may be used. This is an exception to the rule that all labels must be used in pairs.

Major details give the necessary support or proof that will help the readers understand the main idea mentioned in the topic sentence. The major details are labeled with capital letters.

Finally, minor details which clarify or give examples of the major details are labeled with numbers.

Exercise B

In each of these exercises

1. Choose the topic, and write it as the title.
2. Decide what are the main ideas, and label them in the first column with Roman numerals.
3. Decide what are the major details, and label them in the second column with capital letters.

1. _____

2. _____

I.		Individual			Office
	A.	Hiking			Manager
	B.	Swimming			Secretary
	C.	Walking			Clerk
II.		Two-person			Factory
		Tennis			Supervisor
		Racquetball			Laborers
		Team			Hospital
		Baseball			Doctor
		Soccer			Nurse
		Hockey			Orderly Two-person

Step Three: Understand minor details.

Remember that minor details clarify or provide examples of the major details. They must have something in common with the major detail listed above.

Exercise C

In each of these exercises

1. Choose the topic, and write it as the title.
2. Decide what are the main ideas, and label them in the first column with Roman numerals.
3. Decide what are the major details, and label them in the second column with capital letters.
4. Decide what are the minor details, and label them in the third column with an Arabic number.

1. **Breakfast Foods**

2. _____

I.			Hot				Nonalcoholic
	A.		Cereal				Juice
		1.	Oatmeal				Grape
		2.	Cream of Wheat				Orange
	B.		Eggs				Apple
			Scrambled				Soft drink
			Fried				Cola
			Soft boiled				Ginger ale
			Meat				Alcoholic
			Bacon				Beer
			Sausage				Wine
			Ham				Red wine
			Cold				White wine
			Cereal				Liquor
			Wheaties				Gin
			Cheerios				Rum
			Beverages				
			Juice				
			Milk				

Step Four: Understand the difference between main ideas stated in the topic sentence and major and minor details.

Remember major and minor details are used to support or prove the main ideas. Major details often follow key words known as transitions. A few such words are first, next, last, another. There are many transitions. If you are not familiar with them, get the handout on transitions.

When outlining a paragraph

1. List the topic.
2. Next to the Roman numeral I list the topic sentence which states the main idea.
3. Below the topic sentence, indent two spaces and list each major detail with a capital letter.
4. Below the major detail, indent two spaces and list each minor detail with an Arabic numeral.

Exercise D

1. The topic and topic sentence have been given.
2. In the outline format, list the statements on the left in logical order.
3. First, find all the different major details and list them by the capital letters.
4. Next, list all the fact and examples that explain the major details. These are minor details, and they are each given an Arabic numeral.

1. Topic sentence: The ancient Romans were unlike the Greeks in many ways.

The Greeks granted citizenship to many conquered people.

The Greeks made great contributions to literature and philosophy.

First, they differed in the views of citizenship.

The Romans developed practical methods for government and the legal system

The Romans stressed citizenship as part of national heritage.

Second, each were leaders in their own special field.

A. _____

1. _____

2. _____

B. _____

1. _____

2. _____

Step Five: Understand how to outline a paragraph.

To outline a paragraph

1. Read the entire paragraph.
2. Decide what the topic is and make it the title.
3. Find the topic sentence that states the main idea.
To synthesize the statement, write it in your own words.
However, make sure it is a complete sentence. List it next to Roman numeral 1.
4. List in your own words all the major details which support the main idea.
5. List in your own words the minor details which clarify the major details.

Exercise E

Read the following paragraph, and outline it according to the directions above.

Teenagers take drugs for several reasons. Young people can get drugs easily. They are available everywhere: football games, shopping centers, even the school cafeteria. Most teens can afford these drugs by using their allowances and earning from part-time jobs. Another reason for teens to take drugs is that many have psychological problems. They feel taking drugs is a way to escape from making decisions. At this age, they also have the problem of establishing their independence from their parents. Finally, they may use drugs because of peer pressure. Hoping to be part of the “gang,” the teen turn to drugs to be accepted. Even the most mature teen might be tempted to use drugs rather than risk being left out. For all of these reasons, drugs are a major problem facing teens.

Topic: _____

I. (Main Idea) _____

A. (Major Detail) _____

1. (Minor Detail) _____

2. (Minor Detail) _____

B. (Major Detail) _____

1. (Minor Detail) _____

2. (Minor Detail) _____

C. (Major Detail) _____

1. (Minor Detail) _____

2. (Minor Detail) _____

Step Six: Understand how to outline an essay.

To outline an essay

1. Read through the entire essay, and find the topic. List it as the title.
2. Locate the main idea of each essay. This is referred to as the thesis statement. It is the controlling idea. It tells the reader what the writer will be discussing in the essay. It is usually found in the first or second paragraph.
3. Read the thesis statement, and write it in your own words next to the label thesis.
4. Read through each of the remaining paragraphs.
5. List the main ideas, and label them with the Roman numerals.
6. List the major details, and label them with capital letters.
7. List the minor details, and label them with Arabic numerals.

PEER PRESSURE

We often hear about the dangers of peer pressure to teenagers. Teenagers take drugs, skip school, get drunk, or have sex because their friends do these things. However, there is another—perhaps equally bad—effect of peer pressure. Desperate to conform to their friends' values, teens may give up their interests in school, hobbies, and even in certain people.

Teenagers may, first of all, lose or hide their interest in school in order to be like their friends. They adopt a negative attitude in which school is seen as a battlefield, with teachers and other officials regarded as the enemy. In addition, teenagers may stop participating in class. It is no longer cool to raise a hand or seem anxious to learn. It is cool to show up without the assigned homework. Conforming also means not joining many after-school activities. A teenager might be curious about the band, the Spanish club, the student council, or the computer club. However, he/she does not dare join if the gang feels such activities are for squares.

Teenagers also give up private pleasures and hobbies to be one of the crowds. Certain things, such as writing poems, practicing piano, reading books, or fooling around with a chemistry set may be off limits because the crowd laughs at them. So, teens often drop these interests. He or she may exchange them for riding around in cars and hanging out at the mall. Even worse, teens have to give up their own values and mock the people who stay interested in such hobbies. Against their better instincts, they label as “creep” the girl who is always reading books. They may even tease the boy who spends after-school time in the biology lab by calling him a “nerd”. Most important, giving up private pleasure during these years can mean that the teenager loses these interests forever. It may only be as an adult that the person wishes he or she had kept up with piano, ballet, or astronomy. He or she may then feel it is now too late to start again.

Finally, teenagers sometimes give up the people they love in order to be accepted. If necessary they sacrifice the old friend who no longer dresses well enough, listens to the right kind of music, or refuses to drink or take drugs. Potential boyfriends and girlfriends may be rejected, too, if the crowd doesn't like their values. Sadly, teenagers can even cut their families out of their lives. They may be ashamed of the parents who are too poor, too conventional, too different from friends: parents. Even if the teens are not completely ashamed of their parents, they may still refuse to participate in family get-togethers or spend time with younger brothers or sisters.

It is true many teenagers face the pressures of being forced to take drugs, to perform dangerous stunts, to do risky things. But a more common and perhaps more painful pressure is to conform to the crowd by giving up part of oneself. Attachments to learning, to special interests, and to special people are often thrown away just to “to be one of the guys.”
(Taken from John Langan *English_Skills* Thirded 1985.)

Topic: _____

Thesis: _____

I. (Main idea stated in the topic sentence) _____

A. (Major detail) _____

B. _____

1. (Minor detail) _____

2. _____

C. _____

1. _____

2. _____

II. _____

A. _____

1. _____

2. _____

B. _____

1. _____

2. _____

C. _____

1. _____

2. _____

III. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

1. _____

2. _____

Understanding these steps when outlining can help you organize information in a clear and logical manner. Using these steps can help you outline with ease.

ANSWER KEY

Exercise A

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <u>Symptoms of the flu</u>
Headache
Runny Nose
Fever
Chills | 2. <u>Kind of fuels</u>
Wood
Oil
Gas
Kerosene |
| 3. <u>Parts of the body</u>
Arm
Wrist
Ankle
Toe | 4. <u>Presidents</u>
Lincoln
Reagan
Jefferson
Roosevelt |

Exercise B

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <u>Sports</u> | 2. <u>Occupations</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|

I.		Individual	I.		Office
	A.	Hiking		A.	Manager
	B.	Swimming		B.	Secretary
	C.	Walking		C.	Clerk
II.		Two-Person	II.		Factory
	A.	Tennis		A.	Supervisor
	B.	Racquetball		B.	Laborers
III.		Team	III.		Hospital
	A.	Baseball		A.	Doctor
	B.	Soccer		B.	Nurse
	C.	Hockey		C.	Orderly

Exercise C.

1. Breakfast Foods

2. Drinks

1.			Hot	1.			Nonalcoholic
	A.		cereal		A.		Juice
		1.	Oatmeal			1.	Grape
		2.	Cream of Wheat			2.	Orange
	B.		Eggs		B.		Soft Drink
		1.	Scrambled			1.	Cola
		2.	Fried			2.	Ginger ale
	.	3.	Soft Boiled	II.			alcoholic
	C.		Meat		A.		Beer
		1.	Bacon		B.		Wine
		2.	Sausage			1.	Red wine
		3.	Ham			2.	White wine
II.			Cold		C.		Liquor
	A.		Cereal			1.	Gin
		1.	Wheaties			2.	Rum
		2.	Cheerios				
	B.		Beverages				
		1.	Juice				
		2.	Milk				

Exercise D

Some people never wash, wax or vacuum car.

There are the protective owners.

A few clean the car only if someone writes in the dirt on it.

There are always the indifferent owners.

Some hardy souls deliberately ignore needed maintenance.

Finally, there are the abusive owners.

They service the car only when it breaks down.

Many proud owners wash and polish the car every week.

They keep every mechanical item in top shape.

The Greeks granted citizenship to many conquered people.

The Greeks made great contributions to literature and philosophy.

First, they differed in their views of citizenship.

The Romans developed practical methods for government and the legal system

The Romans stressed citizenship as part of national heritage.

Second each were leaders in their own special field.

Topic: Classification of car owners

1. Topic sentence: People can be classified by how they treat their cars.
 - A. There are protective owners.
 1. Many proud owners wash and polish the car every week,
 2. They keep every mechanical item
 - B. There are indifferent owners.
 1. A few clean the car only if someone writes in the dirt on it.
 2. They service the car only when it breaks down.
 - C. There are abusive owners.
 1. Some people never wash, wax, or vacuum a car.
 2. Some hardy souls deliberately Ignore needed maintenance.

Topic: Comparing the Greeks to the Romans

1. Topic Sentence; The ancient Romans Were unlike the Greek in many ways.
 - A. First, they differed in their view of citizenship
 1. The Romans stressed citizenship to a part of national heritage.
 2. The Greeks granted citizenship to many conquered people.
 - B. Second, each were leaders in their own specialized field.
 1. The Romans developed practical methods for government and the legal system.
 2. The Greeks made great contribution to literature and philosophy.

Exercise E

Topic: Teenagers and Drugs

- I. (Main Idea) There are several reasons why teenagers take drugs.
 - A. (Major Detail) They can get drugs easily.
 1. (Minor Detail) They are available everywhere; football games, shopping Centers event he school cafeteria.
 2. (Minor Detail) Most teens have spending money for drugs because of Allowances and earning from their jobs.
 - B. (Major Detail) Another problem is that teens have psychological problems.
 1. (Minor Detail) They take drugs to escape from making decisions
 2. (Minor Detail) They are also trying to establish independence from parents.
 - C. (Major Detail) They may use drugs to be accepted.
 1. (Minor Detail) They want to be part of the “gang”.
 2. (Minor Detail) They do not want to be considered an outcast.

Exercise F

Topic Peer Pressure

Thesis: Desperate to conform to the values of their friends, teens may give up interest in school, hobbies, and even certain people.

- I. (Main idea stated in the topic sentence) Teens lose or hide their interest in school.
 - A. (Major detail) They adopt a negative attitude.
 - B. They stop participating in class.
 1. (Minor detail) They do not raise their hand or seem anxious to learn.
 2. They come to class without their assignments.
 - C. They do not join in after-school activities.
 1. A teen may be curious about an activity.
 2. However, he/she does not dare to join.
- II. He/she gives up private hobbies or pleasures to be part of the crowd.
 - A. Certain hobbies may be put off, so the teen will be accepted not laughed at.
 1. He/she may drop these interests.
 2. He/she may exchange them for riding in cars or ganging out in the mall.
 - B. Teens may give up their own values and mock others.
 1. They may call a girl who reads a “creep.”
 2. They may call a boy who studies a “nerd.”
 - C. They may lose interest in their private pleasures forever.
 1. It may not be until they become an adult that they wish they had continued the piano, ballet, or astronomy.
- III. Finally, they may give up the people they love.
 - A. They sacrifice old friends.
 - B. Potential boyfriends and girlfriends may be rejected, too.
 - C. They cut themselves off from, their families.
 1. They may be ashamed that their parents are too poor, too conventional, too different
 2. They refuse to participate in family get together or spend time with younger brother or sisters.