

Research: Creating an Outline

What is an outline?

- A summary of main points
- An organizational chart
- A visual diagram of your research

What is the purpose of an outline?

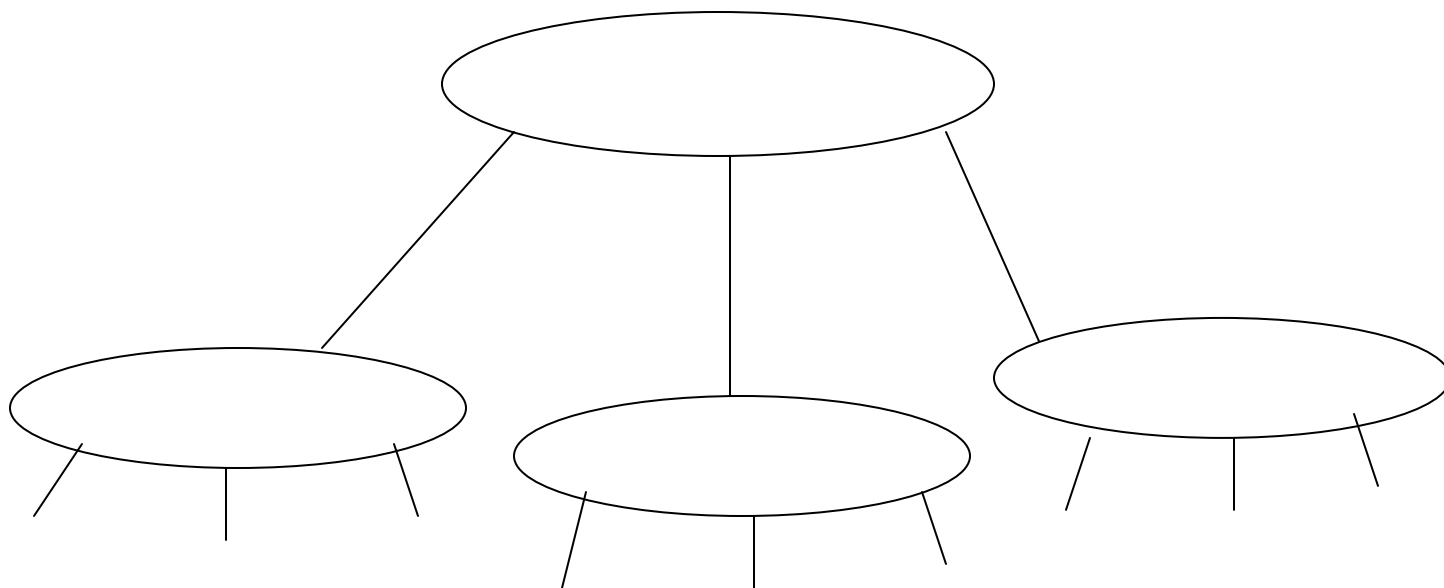
- Organizes your main points
- Places your research in logical order
- Creates an order for your research that will assist you in organizing your paragraphs when you begin writing

How do you begin writing an outline?

Now that you have established a topic and thesis,

- Brainstorm the ideas you want to include in your paper
- Group similar topics together
- Begin and end with your strongest points
- Organize the topic groups by general topic to more specific topic
- Create subject headings for the main topic groups and specific topic

One way to organize your ideas and topics in order to create an outline is to create a web:



How are outlines formatted?

Each main topic is given a Roman numeral (I., II., III., IV., V., etc.).

Once the main topics have been established, they are divided into subtopics, which are given capital letters (A., B., etc.).

Once the subtopics have been established you can further subdivide the topic by providing supporting details which are given numbers (1., 2., etc.).

Once the supporting details have been established, examples can be provided which are given lower case letters (a., b., etc.).

Reminder: Roman numeral I. should represent your introduction and the last Roman numeral should represent your conclusion. Whenever you divide a topic you should always have at least two subtopics. If you have a Roman numeral I. you should have a II. and if you have an A. you should have a B.

Example

Topic: Presidency of Richard Nixon

Thesis: Richard Nixon contributed a great deal to U.S. foreign relations during his presidency.

- I. Introduction – Richard Nixon’s presidency
 - A. Nixon’s political background
 - 1. Education
 - 2. Political positions held before U.S. Presidency
 - B. Political philosophy
 - 1. Conservative versus liberal views on issues
 - 2. Main contributions to U.S. politics
- II. Nixon’s specific contributions to foreign relations
 - A. China
 - 1. Opening of diplomatic relations with China
 - 2. Meetings with Mao
 - B. Soviet Union
 - 1. Opening of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union
 - 2. Soviet Union’s relationship with China
- III. Conclusion
 - A. Legacy
 - 1. Diplomatic relations began end of the Cold War
 - 2. Opened up diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union
 - B. Contributions to diplomacy largely overshadowed by Watergate scandal