

## Where to Find Help on Campus

Consultants at the **Hamline University Writing Center**, located in the basement of Bush Library, are eager to help you with all stages of your writing. We will work with you whether you have just received an assignment and have no idea how to begin or you have a finished draft and want help with revisions.

You can make appointments online at WC Online. Simply follow the instructions at:

<http://rich37.com/hamline>

We look forward to seeing you!



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# Using Outlines



Outlines are an organizational tool. They can form a bridge between your prewriting work and the actual drafting of your paper. Or, if the first draft of your paper is disorganized and hard to follow, creating an outline can help you get it back on track.

### Types of Outlines

You can write an outline that contains full sentences, or you can write one that employs single words and short phrases. Consider, for example, the following two partial outlines:

- I. The purpose of outlines is to organize ideas that will be included in a paper in a logical order so that writing the paper may be more efficient.
  - A. They can be thought of as *recipes* for a paper.
  - B. Outlines contain main points and essential details that will be covered in the main body of the essay.
  
- I. Purpose of outlines
  - A. Recipes
  - B. Main points and details to cover in body of paper

These outlines are on the same subject. The only difference is that one uses full sentences and the other only short phrases.

### Writing an Outline

Your outline for a paper should begin with your thesis statement. For example:

**Thesis:** Outlines are useful tools to bridge the gap between the prewriting process and writing the paper; different types of outlines have specific purposes, processes, and formats to fulfill their ultimate function.

Once you have your thesis statement, you can begin your outline by writing several main points. The numbers of main points will depend on the length of your paper. For example:

- I. The purpose of outlines is to organize ideas.
- II. Outlining is a simple process that will save time when writing the paper.
- III. Many types of outlines exist and are used for specific purposes.

Now that you have expressed your main points, you want to add detail about each of them. Let's look at Roman numeral III.

- III. Many types of outlines exist and are used for specific purposes.
  - A. Sentence outlines use full sentences next to each letter or number.
  - B. Phrase outlines have phrases next to each letter or number.
  - C. Formal outlines are usually handed in to professors or peers and so have more rigid requirements for formatting.

Each of these sub-points can be broken down into smaller points.

- C. Formal outlines are usually handed in to professors or peers and so have more rigid requirements for formatting.
  - 1. **Put** the working title of the paper at the top center of the page.
  - 2. **List** the working thesis before the rest of the outline.
  - 3. **Use** Roman numerals, capital letters, numbers, lowercase letters, and lowercase Roman numerals—in that order—to categorize ideas.

Notice that sub-points are always given in at least groups of two. An outline should not have an A, for example, if it does not also have a B.

Notice also that the sentences or phrases at the same level of specificity (e.g., the A, B, and C, or the 1, 2, and 3) are grammatically parallel. In the previous example, each sentence begins with a verb: Put, List, and Use.

If you are writing an outline for your own use, you do not need to follow these rules. Your outline can be as free flowing as is useful to you.

Keep in mind that your outline addresses only the body of your paper. The introduction and conclusion do not have to be part of the outline.

### Moving from Outline to Paper

Make sure that every point written in the outline relates to the thesis or proves some aspect of it. Delete any ideas that do not relate to your thesis. If you write a sentence outline, you will find that the sentences next to Roman numerals and capital letters work very well as topic sentences for your paragraphs.

Avoid being too specific in your outline. Each sentence or phrase of your outline is a reminder to you of what you want to write, not a compilation of your research notes. The outline tells you which notes to write about in what order.

You may find that as you write your paper you need to change the outline a bit. That is fine. The outline is a guide, but if it does not point you in the right direction, then edit it so that it does.

### Accessing More Information

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

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