

Guidelines for constructing a formal outline

1. Put the thesis at the top.
2. Make items at the same level of generality as [parallel](#) as possible.
3. Use sentences unless phrases are clear.
4. Use the conventional system of numbers and letters for the levels of generality.
5. Always use at least two subdivisions for a category, since nothing can be divided into fewer than two parts.
6. Limit the number of major sections in the outline; if the list of roman numerals begins to look like a laundry list, find some way of clustering the items into a few major categories with more subcategories.
7. Be flexible; in other words, be prepared to change your outline as your drafts evolve.

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