

OUTLINES ARE LIKE

Recipes

NAME: _____

OBJECTIVE:

I can organize ideas into a hierarchy or outline format.

Recipes are pretty important in the culinary world. The right recipe can make a meal impressive, while a bad one can turn a meal into a disaster. That's why great recipes sometimes get handed down from generation to generation (and why even the best chefs still memorize recipes instead of just winging it during an important dish).

In writing, outlines are similar: they are the instructions and ingredients, helping you compose the right sequence of delicious ideas. Without one, you run the risk of creating a draft that is disorganized, unclear, or unbalanced.

An outline is a **list of ideas that shows what you will discuss in what order**. An outline can be an informal bullet list, or it might be a formal, alphanumeric outline.

Teacher's Note:

Not all types of writing require an outline, and I'm not suggesting that other types of prewriting are bad. However, knowing how to write a good outline is a skill that some of your future teachers and bosses might expect, especially in formal essays or reports.

What did you notice about these two examples?

Informal bullet list	Alphanumeric Outline
<p>To-Do List for Saturday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Go to the toy store <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Pick out a birthday present <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Needs to be appropriate for a three-year-old o Get batteries if needed · Go to the grocery store <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Order cake at the bakery o Get plates and cups o Pick out snack foods o Get wrapping paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Blue or green o Pick up finished cake from bakery · Go home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Wrap the present o Set up the cake o Set the table and prep snacks 	<p>Why School Should Start Later</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student health would improve. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. More students would finally get enough sleep. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Students are supposed to get at least 8 hours, but usually don't. ii. If students get 8 or more hours as recommended, their grades and test scores would likely improve. b. Students will have more time to eat breakfast, shower, and take care of themselves. 2. Sports would benefit also. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Student-athletes would be well-rested for practices and games. b. Their muscles would recover better between events.
<p>Our observations:</p>	<p>Our observations:</p>



DISCUSS:

When your outline is done, how will it make essay writing easier and/or faster?

SEEMS EASY, RIGHT? LET'S GET STARTED!

OUTLINES ARE LIKE

Recipes

NAME: _____



PART 1: HOW TO WRITE AN OUTLINE

Hopefully you noticed on the previous page that outlines...

- **Group ideas by paragraph:** The first set of bullets is the introduction, the second set is the first body paragraph, and so on.
- **Put ideas in an exact order:** Make sure every bullet is in the exact order that you plan to discuss it in the draft.
- **Separate main ideas from supporting details:** The first major bullet of the paragraph will become your topic sentence, while the bullets underneath (that are indented) stay focused on proving your topic sentence.
- **Are consistent:** Not only should you use a consistent formatting style, but you should also consistently write in EITHER fragments OR complete sentences. (Don't mix and match them!)

- **Only write one sentence per bullet.** The next sentence should happen BELOW it, either at the same "level" or indented in/out.
- **Alternate numbers and letters** (IF it's an alphanumeric one)
- **Keep "levels" in pairs.** Some teachers feel strongly that each "level" should have at least two items (a and b, i and ii, etc.). Other teachers will not expect this pattern. Either way, it's not a bad idea (to ensure that you use enough detail and/or explanation while writing).
- **Includes citations:** If this is a research assignment, include your citations NOW at the end of each sentence or level that needs one. (This step is important to ensure you don't accidentally plagiarize because you FORGET to cite later or mix up sources.)

Pro Tip: If you are typing your outline, let the computer format the outline FOR you! Word, Pages, and Google Docs all have an outline button in the toolbar; once its activated, use the Enter and Tab buttons to make new lines and indent the levels.

Let's Practice: Make an informal bullet list to outline at least ONE of the body paragraphs in your essay. Use the checklist on the right to make sure you've included everything!

COPY your thesis here so you keep your paragraph's ideas focused:

Outline your paragraph here:

Is your outline...

- Consistent in formatting and complete sentences?
- At least 7 bullets (or sentences) long?
- In the exact order that you will discuss them?
- Written with only ONE sentence per "level"?
- Correctly indenting main vs. supporting ideas?

REVIEW:

Tell me at least two reasons why it could be helpful to make an outline before starting the drafting phase of writing.



OUTLINES ARE LIKE

Recipes

NAME: _____



PART 2: HOW TO USE AN OUTLINE

Now that you have an outline, what exactly should you do with it?

Here's a secret: the more detailed and complete your outline is, the less work you have to do during the drafting phase! So, before we move on, it might be a good idea to check your outline and see if there are any spots in which you...

- Still need to cite a direct quote and/or paraphrase
- Could add a follow-up sentence analyzing why a fact is important
- Forgot to give a fact its "pair"
- Could add a transition sentence between paragraphs or ideas
- Could explain something in more detail

If your outline has "enough" content in it, then you won't have to add more writing to your draft during the process of "converting" the outline into an essay. (Save yourself some time by doing the work up front and making the conversion & revision process more satisfying!)

Here's what to do with your finished outline:

1. Prepare a new document with proper formatting.

2. Type up your entire outline, IN ORDER.

- a. If your outline was written in fragments, now is the time to "convert" your content into complete sentences!

3. Read it over, looking for moments that...

- a. Need transition words, like "In fact", "in addition", "therefore", etc.
- b. Need transitional sentences to make the "jump" between ideas less abrupt and choppy. Be sure to look between paragraphs to make sure the switch of ideas doesn't sound too random.
- c. Need more explanation. If you were accidentally too concise while outlining, now is the time to add more

sentences that explain more, give examples, analyze, or describe. (Since you don't have to worry about formatting anymore, don't hesitate to just WRITE!)

4. Proceed with normal proofreading.

- a. Check grammar and spelling, using more than one method (and not just relying on spell check.)
- b. Read it one final time.
- c. Show it to peers, teachers, or other adults.
- d. Check your draft against the rubric, prompt, or directions given by the teacher (to make sure you've met their expectations and are REALLY done).
- e. Print or submit according to the teacher's guidelines.

REVIEW & DISCUSS:

1. How did this outlining process make essay writing faster and/or easier?

2. What steps do you still need help understanding or doing?

3. What's the biggest thing you've learned from this lesson?

