

# The Basic Outline of a Paper

The following outline shows a basic format for most academic papers. No matter what length the paper needs to be, it should still follow the format of having an introduction, body, and conclusion. Read over what typically goes in each section of the paper. Use the back of this handout to outline information for your specific paper.

## I. Introduction

The introduction should have **some** of the following elements, depending on the type of paper:

- Start with an attention-getter: a short story, memorable quote, startling statistic, or interesting historical context that introduces the paper topic
- Give an overview of any issues involved with the subject
- Definition of any key terminology needed to understand the topic
- Highlight background information on the topic needed to understand the direction of the paper
- Must include a THESIS statement (1 to 2 sentences in length):
  - Tells what the paper will focus on
  - Briefly outlines the main points in the paper

## II. Body

- Clearly presents the main points of the paper as listed in the thesis
- Gives strong examples, details, and explanations to support **each** main points
- If an argumentative paper, addresses any counterarguments and refutes those arguments
- If a research paper, use strong evidence from sources—paraphrases, summaries, and quotations that support the main points

## III. Conclusion

- Restates your thesis in different words
- Briefly summarizes each main point found in the body of the paper (avoid using more than 2 sentences for each point)
- Gives a statement of the consequences of not embracing the position (argumentative paper only)
- Ends with a strong clincher statement: an appropriate, meaningful final sentence that ties the paper together (may refer back to the attention grabber)

## Additional Tips

- Decide on the thesis and main points first
- You do not need to start writing your paper with the introduction
- Try writing the thesis and body first; then go back and figure out how to best introduce the body and conclude the paper
- Use transitions between main points and between examples within the main points
- Always keep your thesis in the forefront of your mind while writing; everything in your paper must point back to the thesis

Paper Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Introduction

Possible ideas for the introduction

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Thesis Statement (Usually the last sentence(s) in the introduction):

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## II. Body

Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Main Point:

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Supporting Evidence—quote, paraphrase, summarize

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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III. Conclusion

Reworded Thesis (Usually found near the beginning of the conclusion):

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Other Ideas to Conclude:

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Clincher Statement:

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