

Writing Handout W-3:

Creating an Effective Outline

Organizing an effective essay is similar to constructing a new building. It requires a detailed plan, a blueprint to develop a thesis statement. An outline serves as a blueprint for an essay and helps guide the writing process.

Sample outline 1

- I. **Introduction:** Hollywood has a long history of producing adventure films. *Avatar* has some obvious merits, but there are also some significant flaws.
- II. **Body paragraph 1:** Cinematography in *Avatar* (merits)
 - A. Feelings of flight
 - B. Skillful blend of animation with live action
- III. **Body paragraph 2:** Special effects in *Avatar* (merits)
 - A. Amazing landscapes
 - B. Spectacular explosions
- IV. **Body paragraph 3:** Faults in *Avatar* (flaws)
 - A. Predictable plot
 - B. Atrocious acting
- V. **Conclusion** (a paragraph that restates the thesis and sums up the argument)

Notes:

- The introduction includes the thesis statement.
- The body paragraphs support the thesis statement with specific examples and details.
- Following the points outlined above, this outline could function as a guide for a five- or eight-paragraph research paper (including introduction and conclusion). Each of the points could function as a supporting paragraph.

Sample outline 2

The following outline could function as a guide to body (support) paragraphs for a long research paper about the economic impact of professional sports on Florida's economy.

I. Introduction (including a thesis statement).

Florida has long been dependent upon tourism to boost the state's economy, but few people realize the enormous economic impact of visiting sports fans. Florida's economy is fueled by a wide assortment of professional sporting events that contribute more than \$30 billion annually to the state's economy.

II. Professional baseball spring training

- A. The Mets
- B. The Yankees

III. Professional football

- A. The Miami Dolphins
- B. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers
- C. The Jacksonville Jaguars

IV. Motorsports

- A. Daytona
 - 1. Auto racing
 - 2. Motorcycle racing
 - 3. Sports-car racing
- B. Sebring

V. Professional golf

- A. The Honda Classic
- B. LPGA Tour Championship

VI. Pari-mutuels

- A. Jai Alai
- B. Horse racing
- C. Dog racing

VII. Conclusion

This paragraph sums up the research, usually referring back to the thesis statement but using different words.

Note: A long research paper could be composed of many body paragraphs, each containing specific examples or supports (financial impact in this example).

Following this outline, for example, the research paper could be written as five body paragraphs (baseball, football, motorsports, golf, and pari-mutuels) or many body paragraphs, each focusing on one of the separate categories within the five major topics.

Either way, each paragraph must provide research information concerning the economic impact of the categories. The topic sentences of each paragraph could be supported by citing a variety of sources and statistics, such as the impact of visiting sports fans on the local economy (restaurants, motels, gas stations, etc.) and/or sales taxes and room taxes.