

The Extended Essay: Constructing an Effective Outline

A. The Usefulness of an Outline

Outlines are especially helpful for significantly large essays because they help both you and your supervisor make sense of and organize an overwhelmingly large amount of information. Outlines are meant to be flexible to change; the best writers do not cement a rough outline into permanence the first time around. They recognize that the best papers will need alterations to not only content and mechanics, but also organization. Let's take a look at the various ways in which you may outline your extended essay.

B. Models of Arrangement for Structuring a Paper

In its final form, your extended essay will generally be argued in one of the following ways. The best extended essays are most frequently ones in which the student writers can automatically answer which model of arrangement their paper takes. If you cannot or have not considered that by submission time, the criteria for content and organization will likely not receive full points. Content is directly affected by organization and vice versa. As you read the following models of arrangement below, consider which would be best suited for your particular subject area and then for your topic or question:

1. Chronological order: from first event to last event or from last event to first event
2. Spatial order: by arrangement in space
3. Classification: in groups sharing similar properties or characteristics
4. Order of degree: according to interest, importance, value, obviousness, certainty, or a similar quality
5. Cause-and-effect: from cause to effect or from effect to cause
6. Comparison-and-contrast order: from similarities to differences or from differences to similarities
7. Analytical order: according to parts and relationships among the parts
8. Inductive order, or synthesis: from specific examples to generalization based on those examples
9. Deductive order: from a general idea or principle to specific conclusions based on that general idea or principle
10. Order of impression, or association: according to the sequence in which things strike one's attention
11. Hierarchical order: from class to subclass (group within a class) or from subclass to class

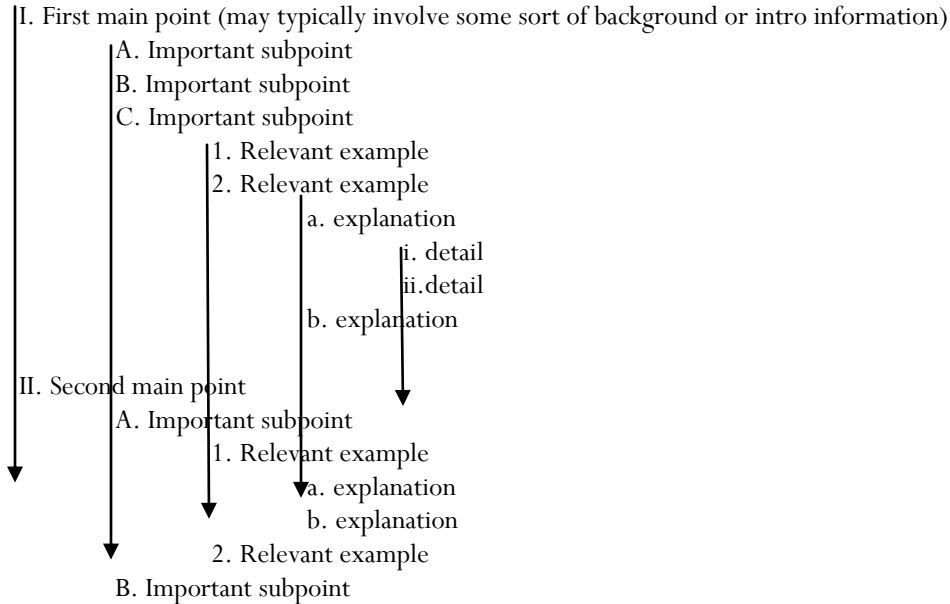
How did that go? If you look at number ten, for example, you should be able to discern that writing a science EE through order of impression would be a disaster. For an English EE? It might be very effective, if appropriate to your topic. It all depends, but note this: **It is very important that you consider discussing your organizational model of arrangement with your supervisor before you write your first draft.** Remember, once that draft is written, your supervisor cannot tell you where to move paragraphs or how to organize your EE. So, have that discussion early on. One final note: let's re-emphasize that there is no set formula for organizing your paper. Even within these eleven models of arrangement, your essay will grow outside these formats, and it should. But the key is to making sure you have clear purpose and direction at all times.

C. Drafting a Preliminary Outline

There are two kinds of outlines: topic outlines and sentence outlines. A topic outline is made up of key words or groups, while a sentence outline is made entirely of complete sentences. Both kinds are acceptable, but talk to your supervisor about which one he/she would prefer you complete. A typed topic outline would appear like this:

Topic Outline: Working Title of Paper Here (Centered)

Working Thesis: (write here)



General Rules for Outline Presentation

1. Alternate numbers and letters
 - A. Use Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, and so on) for main topics
 - B. Use capital letters for subpoints
 - C. Use Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3) for examples
 - D. Use lowercase letters for details
2. Use a period after each division or letter
3. Capitalize the first word of each point
4. Place no periods after the point in a topic outline
5. Maintain parallel structure. Do not mix topic and sentence outlines. All entries should be phrases or sentences
6. For any point, make at least two subdivisions underneath or none, since it is impossible to divide whole idea into only one piece!
7. All categories (Roman numerals, letters, numbers) should fall under the same indenting line down the page for readability. In other words, if you were to use a ruler, all Roman numerals would align, all capital letters would align, all lowercase letters would align, and so on (see arrows above).

D. Model of a Topic and Sentence Outline

Topic Outline: The Political Message of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

Working Thesis: The purpose of this paper is to show that Steinbeck's novel expressed a strong political message; it warned that exploitation of migrant workers would cause them to rise up as a group against their oppressors, the state, and the wealthy landowners.

- I. The historical background of the migrant situation
 - A. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s
 - B. The migration to California
 - C. The nature of California agriculture
 - D. The living conditions among the migrants
 1. low pay
 2. issues of safety
 - a. farm and field equipment
 - b. lack of local resources
 - i. doctors and local hospitals
 - ii. transportation
 3. extended workweek
- II. Steinbeck's opinions about the migrant situation
 - A. Steinbeck's publication of *Their Blood is Strong*
 - B. Steinbeck's descriptions of the migrants' lives
 - C. Steinbeck's warning about the consequences of exploitation
- III. Steinbeck's message about the migrant situation in *The Grapes of Wrath*
 - A. The Joads as self-absorbed, passive victims
 - B. The Joads as active agents of change
 - C. The conclusion of the novel as a warning
 - D. The title of the novel as a parallel between the migrant system and Babylon

Here is how the last section would look as a sentence outline:

- III. What was Steinbeck's message about the migrant situation in *The Grapes of Wrath*?
 - A. The Joads began their time of struggle as self-absorbed, passive victims.
 - B. During the struggle, the Joads became active agents of change.
 - C. The conclusion of the novel is a warning.
 - D. The title of the novel draws a parallel between the migrant system and Babylon.