Essay Outline [Template]

I. Introduction
   A. Get the reader’s attention by asking a leading question; relay something enticing about the subject in a manner that commands attention. Start with a related quote, alluring description, or narration.
   B. State the thesis — the causes and effects to be discussed; comparison of subject X and subject Y; your position on the issue; your proposal if applicable; and the main points that will develop your argument.

II. Body
   A. First Point, Assertion, Explanation
      1. Supporting evidence (examples, facts, statistics, quoted authorities, details, reasons, examples)
      2. Supporting evidence
   B. Second explanation
      1. Support
      2. Support
   C. Third explanation
      1. Support
      2. Support
   D. Fourth explanation (continue as above with additional explanations as needed.)
      1. Support
      2. Support
   E. Your proposal (if applicable)
   F. Address opposing viewpoints

III. Conclusion
   A. Show how explanations (causes) are logical reasons producing the effects discussed; review subject X and subject Y; reiterate your assertion and proposition (if applicable). Reemphasize your thesis in a fresh way, showing how you have achieved your purpose. If you intend to draw to a conclusion about one subject over the other, emphasize that point.
   B. Deal with opposing views unless done above in Section F.
   C. Appeal to the reader to see how you have come to a logical conclusion.
   D. Make a memorable final statement.
Some other things to consider:

Writing Process

1. Select your subject and decide on your point of view:
   - cause and effect,
   - compare and contrast,
   - persuasive,
   - or some other viewpoint.

2. The thesis is your statement of purpose. The thesis should be one sentence in length. This is the foundation of your essay and it will serve to guide you in writing the entire paper. Don’t begin to write your essay until you have a clear thesis. And remember that a thesis statement must contain both the topic and a POINT. That is, a subject (the “what”) and your position (the “so what”).

3. Gather all factual information using guidelines for documentation and works cited, i.e., APA or The Chicago Manual of Style. Check with your librarian for formatting guidelines.

4. Consider all potential explanations, rating them in order of importance or relevance to the thesis.

5. Assemble collected facts to support each explanation.

6. Prepare an outline arranging the explanations in the best order for the desired effect. The purpose of an outline is to make your task easier. As you write your outline, ask yourself whether each idea serves to clarify and strengthen the thesis. Use the sample outline by inserting your specific information into the outline structure.

7. Write a rough draft of the essay, saving at least two copies to your hard disk or onto a floppy diskette.

8. Lay the paper aside.

9. Proofread later with a fresh perspective; the computer can check spelling errors easily. Be aware that sometimes a word is correctly spelled but used incorrectly in a particular sentence. It is still important to proofread after the spell check.

10. Print the final copy.