

## Developing an Outline

Creating an outline will help you to plan your essay, arrange your points in a logical order and indicate the importance of and relationships between the points. Outlines may take different forms. In the early stages of the writing process, you may develop an informal outline or diagram such as a mind map or a flow chart. If you are writing a compare/contrast assignment, you may start by making lists: a list of similarities and differences between your subjects and a list of criteria that you may apply. For an evaluation assignment, you might develop lists of the strengths and weaknesses of your subject and then begin to determine which are most important. The following are several samples of informal and formal outlines.

### Informal Outlines

Topic: the 2012 Quebec student protests

Narrowed topic: an examination of the scope, strength, and persistence of the 2012 Quebec student protests

#### CAUSES

1. Strong historical and cultural support of accessible post-secondary education in Quebec
2. 2010 Government plan to initiate tuition increases
3. Participation of other groups in protests such as opposition parties and workers' unions
4. Creation of Bill 78 (incited further conflict)

#### EFFECTS

1. Tuition freeze in September, 2012
2. Change of government after next election
3. Former student leaders now involved in politics
4. But lack of substantive discussion about equity in education in Quebec

### Formal Outlines

Like the informal outline, a formal outline should be a single-page display of the line of thinking your essay will develop. However, a formal outline is usually more detailed. It begins with a working thesis statement and then presents major and minor sections of the essay in a logical order, clearly showing the relationships between the thesis statement, main points, subordinate points, and examples. For an expository essay, you may simply use key words or phrases to delineate your sections; for a persuasive essay, it's useful to write full topic sentences for your supporting and sub-points to show how your argument will progress.

### Expository essay outline

**Working Thesis statement:** As social determinants of health, both unemployment and education have significant effects on the lives of the children in *The Glass Castle*; however, unemployment has devastating effects while education provides a way to a better life.

#### I. Similarities – both determinants have a major effect on children

##### A. The effects of the father's chronic unemployment:

###### 1. Frequent moves, lack of a stable home, uncertainty

a. isolation, lack of social network

b. lack of access to social services

###### 2. Poverty

a. poor sanitation and nutrition

##### B. The effects of education:

###### 1. Exposure to knowledge and different living conditions

a. intellectual development

###### 2. Access to social support

a. teachers

b. friends

#### II. Differences – outcomes of these effects vastly different

##### A. Father's unemployment leads to worsening life conditions and negative effects on children

###### 1. effects on children's mental health

a.

b.

###### 2. effects on children's physical health

a.

B. Education provides benefits that lead to changed life circumstances and improved health

1. effect on children's mental health

a.

2. changed life circumstances

a.

b.

3. improved mental and physical health

a.

b.

## Persuasive essay outlines

In this sample, topic sentences related to the thesis are placed at the beginning of each section of the intended essay. Section C demonstrates how to include sub-points and evidence.

**Working Thesis statement:** The Canadian Charter protects many rights and freedoms of Canadians. However, the exercise of some of these rights and freedoms is undermined by a limited accessibility to both the political process and higher education.

Section A: The Charter extends democratic and equality rights to its citizens.

1.

2.

Section B: However, democratic rights are undermined by a limited accessibility to the political process.

1.

2.

3.

Section C: As well, despite equality rights, many Canadians are disadvantaged by a limited accessibility to higher education.

1. The cost of post-secondary education is now prohibitive to many Canadians.
  - a. average household income across provinces
  - b. average tuition costs for several major programs at colleges and universities
2. The number of grants and scholarships for students has decreased.
  - a. grants
  - b. Scholarships
3. In some areas, secondary school students are not encouraged to pursue higher education or are inadequately informed about their options, both of which limit their ability to access it.
  - a. families not encouraging
  - b. lack of career planning services in some schools

### Formal Outline Template

You can use this template in whatever way you need: add supporting points or topic areas, examples, etc.

Thesis statement:

I. First supporting point or key topic area:

A. Sub-point or subtopic:

1. evidence/example

2. evidence/example

B. Sub-point or subtopic:

1. evidence/example

2. evidence/example

II. Second supporting point or key topic area:

A. Sub-point or subtopic:

1. minor point or detailed information

a. evidence/example

2. minor point or detailed information

a. evidence/example

B. sub-point or subtopic:

C. sub-point or subtopic: