

Essay Outlines: A Guide

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Basically, there are two types of essay outline—one with complete sentences written out, the other alphanumeric or bullet point list.

- The written out one will consist of a thesis statement, and at least five or six topic sentences.

Your thesis at this stage is a working thesis. It will likely change as you move further into the research process. It represents the main controlling idea of your essay, one from brainstorming and your research to-date.

Below is a guide on thesis statements from Purdue OWL. It's a bit basic but gives you an idea of what a good thesis is and is not.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html

Good topic sentences (TSs) represent the main idea of the paragraph. A TS is the most general sentence in the paragraph. Think of paragraphs as upside down pyramids. Following the TS, each sentence will get narrower or more specific than the previous one, as the paragraph drills down to its point(s).

Here is something on TSs that you may find helpful.

<https://www.hancockcollege.edu/writing/documents/Topic%20Sentence%20with%20examples.pdf>

An alphanumeric outline is more like a series of bullet points, using letters and numbers that maps out your essay. Here is an example from Purdue.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/developing_an_outline/documents/20081113013048_544.pdf