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Essay outline planning sheet pdf

An essay outline is a way of planning the structure of your essay before you start writing. It involves writing quick summary sentences or phrases for every point you will cover in each paragraph, giving you a picture of how your argument will unfold. You'll sometimes be asked to submit an essay outline as a separate assignment before you start writing an essay—but even if you don't have to hand one in, it's a good idea to create an outline as part of your writing process. Organizing your material At the stage where you're writing an essay outline, your ideas are probably still not fully formed. You should know your topic and have already done some preliminary research to find relevant sources, but now you need to shape your ideas into a structured argument. Creating categories Look over any information, quotes and ideas you've noted down from your research and consider the central point you want to make in the essay—this will be the basis of your thesis statement. Once you have an idea of your overall argument, you can begin to organize your material in a way that serves that argument. Try to arrange your material into categories related to different aspects of your argument. If you're writing about a literary text, you might group your ideas into themes; in a history essay, it might be several key trends or turning points from the period you're discussing. Three main themes or subjects is a common structure for essays. Depending on the length of the essay, you could split the themes into three body paragraphs, or three longer sections with several paragraphs covering each theme. As you create the outline, look critically at your categories and points: Are any of them irrelevant or redundant? Make sure every topic you cover is clearly related to your thesis statement. Order of information When you have your material organized into several categories, consider what order they should appear in. Your essay will always begin and end with an introduction and conclusion, but the organization of the body is up to you. Consider these questions to order your material: Is there an obvious starting point for your argument? Is there one subject that provides an easy transition into another? Do some points need to be set up by discussing other points first? Presentation of the outline Within each paragraph, you'll discuss a single idea related to your overall topic or argument, using several points of evidence or analysis to do so. In your outline, you present these points as a few short numbered sentences or phrases. They can be split into sub-points when more detail is needed. The template below shows how you might structure an outline for a five-paragraph essay. Essay outline template You can choose whether to write your outline in full sentences or short phrases. Be consistent in your choice; don't randomly write some points as full sentences and others as short phrases. Professional editors proofread and edit your paper by focusing on: Academic style Vague sentences Grammar Style consistency See an example Examples of essay outlines Examples of outlines for different types of essays are presented below: an argumentative, expository, and literary analysis essay. Argumentative essay outline This outline is for a short argumentative essay evaluating the internet's impact on education. It uses short phrases to summarize each point. Its body is split into three paragraphs, each presenting arguments about a different aspect of the internet's effects on education. Argumentative essay outline Expository essay outline This is the outline for an expository essay describing how the invention of the printing press affected life and politics in Europe. The paragraphs are still summarized in short phrases here, but individual points are described with full sentences. Expository essay outline Literary analysis essay outline The literary analysis essay outlined below discusses the role of theater in Jane Austen's novel Mansfield Park. The body of the essay is divided into three different themes, each of which is explored through examples from the book. Literary analysis essay outline Frequently asked questions about essay outlines When do I need to write an essay outline? You will sometimes be asked to hand in an essay outline before you start writing your essay. Your supervisor wants to see that you have a clear idea of your structure so that writing will go smoothly. Even when you do not have to hand it in, writing an essay outline is an important part of the writing process. It's a good idea to write one (as informally as you like) to clarify your structure for yourself whenever you are working on an essay. Should I use full sentences in my essay outline? If you have to hand in your essay outline, you may be given specific guidelines stating whether you have to use full sentences. If you're not sure, ask your supervisor. When writing an essay outline for yourself, the choice is yours. Some students find it helpful to write out their ideas in full sentences, while others prefer to summarize them in short phrases. See also: Critical Thinking This page is the first of two that describe the processes involved in producing an essay for academic purposes, for school, college or university. This page covers the planning stages of essay writing, which are important to the overall process. The second page, Writing an Essay, provides more information on the steps involved in actually writing an essay. We recommend you read both pages to gain a full understanding. Developing the skill of essay writing takes practice, time and patience, your essay writing skills will improve and develop the more you write. With the help of your course tutor (teacher or lecturer) and peers (other students) and from constructive feedback from the marker of your work, writing an essay will become easier as you progress through your studies and your confidence increases. This page details general good practice in essay planning, including what you should do and what you should try to avoid. It is important however, that you understand the specific requirements of your school, college or university. Writing an essay helps you to consider the issues raised in your course and to relate them to your own experience, way of thinking, and also any wider additional reading and research you may have undertaken in order to tackle the essay topic. Writing an essay (or other assignment) is an important part of the learning process. In the writing of an assignment, learning occurs as you think through and interpret the points raised (together with those of other writers on the subject). Presenting your experience and showing understanding within your assignment will, from the marker's point of view, demonstrate your knowledge of the subject area. The Purpose of an Essay The original meaning of an essay is 'an attempt', or a try, at something. It is therefore appropriate to consider writing an essay as a learning exercise. Essays, and other academic writing, focus the mind and encourage you to come to conclusions about what you are studying. Writing is often the best possible way to assimilate and organise information. Writing helps to highlight any areas that you have not fully understood and enables you to make further clarifications. It develops your powers of criticism, analysis and expression, and gives you a chance to try out your and other writers' ideas on the subject. The feedback you receive from the marker of your essay should help to advance your study skills, writing, research and critical thinking skills. What is the Marker Looking For? As an essay - in the context of this page - is an assessed piece of work, it can be very useful to consider what the person who will be assessing the work, the marker, will be looking for. Although different types of essays in different subject areas may vary considerably in their style and content there are some key concepts that will help you understand what is required of you and your essay. When marking an assignment, a marker will look for some of the following elements, which will demonstrate you are able to: Find relevant information and use the knowledge to focus on the essay question or subject. Structure knowledge and information logically, clearly and concisely. Read purposefully and critically. (See our page: Critical Reading for more) Relate theory to practical examples. Analyse processes and problems. Be persuasive and argue a case. Find links and combine information from a number of different sources. Answer the Question One main factor, always worth bearing in mind, is that a marker will usually only award marks for how well you have answered the essay question. It is likely that the marker will have a set of criteria or marking guidelines that will dictate how many marks can be awarded for each element of your essay. Remember it is perfectly possible to write an outstanding essay, but not to have answered the original question. This will, in all likelihood, mean a low mark. Planning is the process of sorting out what you want to include in your essay. A well-planned and organised essay indicates that you have your ideas in order; it makes points clearly and logically. In this way, a well-planned and structured essay enables the reader, or marker, to follow the points being made easily. Essay assignments are usually formulated in one of the following ways: As a question A statement is given and you are asked to comment on it An invitation to 'outline', 'discuss' or 'critically assess' a particular argument or point of view Remember always write your essay based on the question that is set and not on another aspect of the subject. Although this may sound obvious, many students do not fully answer the essay question and include irrelevant information. The primary aim of an academic essay is to answer the task set, in some detail. To help you do this, you might find the following list of stages helpful. The essay plan below contains ten steps. It is often useful to complete the first six steps soon after receiving your essay question. That way information will be fresh and you are more likely to be thinking about your essay plan as you do other things. Study the essay question intently. Write the essay question out in full. Spend some time, at least half an hour, brainstorming the subject area. Write down your thoughts on the question subject, its scope and various aspects. List words or phrases that you think need to be included. Note the main points you should include to answer the question. If, at this point, you feel unsure of what to include, talk to your tutor or a peer to clarify that you are on the right track. Once you have finished the first six steps and you feel sure you know how to proceed, continue to expand on your initial thoughts and build a more in-depth essay outline. Skim through any course material or lecture handouts and start to build up a more detailed outline. Scan through your own lecture notes, and if anything strikes you as relevant to the assignment task, write where to find it on your detailed outline Write down where you will find the necessary information on each of the points in your detailed outline (lecture notes, course handouts etc.). Indicate on the outline where you feel that some further research is necessary. Note down sources of further information, books, journals, webpages and media sources as appropriate. Be careful not to allow your outline to become too complicated; stick to main points and keep it relevant to the question. If you have been given a reading list or a core text book then check the relevant sections of that. See our page: Sources of information for more ideas of where you can find relevant information for your essay. Once your plan is complete, stop and think about the proportions - how many words in total you need to write and how many words to allocate to each section of your essay. Academic essays usually have a word limit and writing within the word limit is an important consideration. Many institutions will penalise students for not writing the correct amount of words - for example, the essay question may call for a 2,000 word essay, there may be a 10% grace, so anything between 1,800 and 2,200 is acceptable. Think about the main elements that need to be covered in the essay. Make sure you allocate the greatest number of words to the 'main body of the essay' and not to a subsidiary point. Decide how much space you can devote to each section of your outline. For example, a third of a page for the introduction, half a page for point 1 which has two sub-points, one and a half pages for point 2 which has five sub-points etc. Although you will not follow such a space scheme rigidly, it does enable you to keep things under control and to know how much detail to put in, keeping the balance of the essay as you originally planned. Of course, you will make minor adjustments to your essay plan as you actually write. However, do not make major adjustments unless you are absolutely certain about the alternative and how it fits into your original scheme. Having a strong essay plan makes the actual task of writing an essay much more efficient.

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