

Writing a Sentence Outline

A **sentence outline** uses complete sentences for all entries and uses correct punctuation.

Advantages: A sentence outline presents a more detailed overview of work including possible topic sentences and is easier and faster for writing the final paper.

An outline has a balanced structure based on the following principles:

- Parallelism
- Coordination
- Subordination
- Division

Parallelism

Whenever possible, in writing an outline, coordinating entries should be expressed in parallel form. That is, nouns should be made parallel with nouns, verb forms with verb forms, adjectives with adjectives, and so on (Example: Nouns: computers, programs, users; Verbs: to compute, to program, to use; Adjectives: home computers, new programs, experienced users). Although parallel structure is desired, logical and clear writing should not be sacrificed simply to maintain parallelism. (For example, there are times when nouns and gerunds at the same level of an outline are acceptable.)

Reasonableness and flexibility of form is preferred to rigidity.

Coordination

In outlining, those items which are of equal significance have comparable numeral or letter designations: an A is equal to a B, a 1 to a 2, an a to a b, etc. Coordinates should be seen as having the same value. Coordination is a principle that enables a writer to maintain a coherent and consistent document.

Subordination

In order to indicate levels of significance, an outline uses major and minor headings. Thus in ordering ideas, you should organize it from general to specific or from abstract to concrete- the more general or abstract the term, the higher the level or rank in the outline. This principle allows your material to be ordered in terms of logic and requires a clear articulation of the relationship between component parts used in the outline. Subdivisions of each higher division should always have the same relationship to the whole.

Division

To divide you always need at least two parts; therefore, there can never be an A without a B, a 1 without a 2, an a without a b, etc. Usually there is more than one way to divide parts; however, when dividing, make sure you are consistent and clear.

Taken in part from: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_outlin.html

See the back for some last minute ideas.

Other hints/suggestions/ideas:

Each Roman numeral should be the topic sentence for that paragraph.

Your research material should most likely be found as a 1 or 2 under an A or B.

Only one sentence per each letter or number; the sentence can be complex, but it should more than likely not be a compound sentence. Definitely, no entry should be a run-on or a fragment.

Do not include your introduction or your conclusion in your outline.

Your outline is a skeleton of your paper. Have enough data and entries to help you write the paper, but do not simply translate the paper into an outline.

When you use your documentation, include the citation information in the outline. This information will help you remember to include it in the actual paper.

Beacause of the length of the paper, it is unlikely that more than 4 Roman numerals will be needed.