

# Creating an Outline for a Research Paper

You've done all your research and found a ton of information on your topic. Before you start writing your paper, take time to create an outline. This will help you organize your information and make the writing process smoother.

We use Roman numerals for an outline. Each Roman numeral stands for a paragraph:

- I. Introduction
- II. First subtopic
- III. Second subtopic
- IV. Third subtopic
- V. Conclusion



This is a good start, but it's even better if we can have a better idea of what will be in each paragraph. For the parts of each paragraph, such as support and examples, we use capital letters. Here's an example outline for a report on the problem of hunger in India:

- I. Introduction
  - A. Brief story about a person working to feed people in India
  - B. Topic sentence
- II. Historical background
  - A. British colonialism of India
  - B. Partition of India and Pakistan
  - C. More recent problems
- III. Social and religious problems
  - A. The caste system
  - B. Religious wars
- IV. Weather
  - A. Global warming (line graph of temperature increases)
  - B. Monsoons
  - C. Drought
- V. Solutions
  - A. Science

*[continued.]*

B. Politics

C. Foreign aide

VI. Conclusion

A. How can we help?

Your outline may be longer or shorter than this; that's fine. This is just an example. Notice I don't need full sentences here. I just need notes to tell myself what information to put in what place. Notice also I've indicated where my visual aid is going. It's hard to tell from this, but I've also thought about how one topic flows to the next. It makes sense to start with the historical background. As social and religious problems also reach far into history, it will be easy to transition from the first topic to the second. For the third, I can simply make a turn ("But it's not just people who cause the problems. . . ") I put science as my first solution because scientific solutions will mostly be focused on natural phenomena.

In my introduction I start with a story about someone who is working to end hunger in India. (This needs to be a true story, of course.) Narrative writing is a great way to bring more interest to any nonfiction topic. In my conclusion I will include something telling how the reader can help with this problem. It may be something as simple as listing a few charities to give to. This leaves the reader with a feeling of power rather than only one of frustration, sadness, or anger.

Your turn! Take the information you've gathered from your research and put it into an outline.

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