

# Writing an Outline

## *What is an outline?*

An outline is meant to help you establish a structure for a paper you are going to write. It is a way for you to demonstrate the main argument (thesis), main points (topic sentences), and main pieces of evidence you are going to present in a paper before actually writing the paper.

Additionally, one of the essential purposes of an outline is to clearly convey the connection between the thesis and each of the topic sentences.

## **Outline Structure**

- I. Introduction
  - A. Thesis: A statement of position and overview of points of argumentation go here.
- II. Body Paragraph 1: Topic sentence goes here.
  - A. Supporting evidence: A paraphrase or quote from one of your sources goes here, along with an in-text citation (to learn how to properly construct in-text citations, please see the following link: <https://awc.ashford.edu/cd-in-text-citation-guide.html>).
    1. Explanation of the meaning of the supporting evidence.
    2. So what? A direct statement on how the supporting evidence does in fact support the claim made in the topic sentence.
- III. Body Paragraph 2: Topic sentence goes here.
  - A. Supporting evidence
    1. Explanation.
    2. So what?
  - B. Supporting evidence
    1. Explanation.
    2. So what?
- IV. Body Paragraph 3: Topic sentence goes here.
  - A. Supporting evidence
    1. Explanation.

## 2. So what?

### **Sample Outline: Argumentative Paper on Obesity and Government Intervention**

- I. Introduction
  - A. Thesis: An individual's weight should be a governmental concern because the medical costs associated with weight-related issues cost taxpayer money, retailers of unhealthy food need to be regulated, and children need to have better options for diet and exercise made available to them.
- II. Body Paragraph 1: The medical cost associated with weight-related issues has significantly contributed to individual taxes.
  - A. Supporting evidence: "...the costs of obesity arising from individuals' poor nutritional choices are borne by society as a whole through taxes, lost productivity, and an overburdened healthcare system. In 2008, the medical costs associated with obesity and obesity-related illnesses totaled US \$147 billion in the United States" (Franck, Grandi, & Eisenberg, 2013, p. 1951).
    1. Explanation: This quote demonstrates not only the connection between obesity, medical costs, and increased taxes, but also shows the exact dollar number costs from a fairly recent year.
    2. So what? This quote supports the claim that weight-related medical issues contribute to increased taxes for all taxpayers by explaining the connection and demonstrating the high dollar costs to show that this is a current problem affecting a government process (taxation) and therefore could appropriately be addressed by government intervention.
- III. Body Paragraph 2: Another reason that weight should be considered a governmental issue is that the market for unhealthy food in America has overtaken the general food market and the government needs to actively curb the incentives to frequent these establishments.
  - A. Supporting Evidence: "[M]eals are increasingly being consumed outside the home, and these meals tend to be higher in fat. A literal fat tax... theoretically would encourage individuals to opt for low-fat or nonfat alternatives" (Franck et al., 2013, p. 1950).
    1. Explanation: This quote alludes to many of the main problems with fast food consumption and explains what a fat tax would attempt to do to curb the consumption of junk food.
    2. So what? Showing that a fat tax would be able to curb overconsumption of obesity-causing fast food demonstrates the need for the government to impose such a thing.
- IV. Body Paragraph 3: Finally, the government is responsible for ensuring that children have access to healthy food and exercise while in school.
  - A. Supporting Evidence: A connection between Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign and a reduction in overall childhood obesity across America has been demonstrated (Tucker, 2013, p. 1).

1. Explanation: This information shows the effectiveness of government-backed programs, with "Let's Move!" as the specific example.
2. So what? Demonstrating the effectiveness of "Let's Move!" campaign supports the concept of government involvement in school food and exercise initiatives to help curb childhood obesity and provide children with the foundation for establishing healthy habits.

## References

Franck, C., Grandi, S., & Eisenberg, M. (2013). Taxing Junk Food to Counter Obesity. *American Journal of Public Health*. 103.11, DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301279

Tucker, C. (2013). Q&A with first lady Michelle Obama: How the Let's Move! Campaign is changing the way kids eat, move. *Nation's Health*. 43.9. Retrieved from nationshealth.com