Outline Completion & Quality Checklist

Part 1: Foundational Elements (✓/✗)

- **Title** is specific, reflects argument, and includes key terms

- **Thesis Statement** is:

  o Arguable (not a fact)

  o Complex enough for 3+ categories

  o Explicitly or implicitly references categories

- **Total Target Word Count** is realistic for scope and stated

- **Organizing Principle** is identifiable (chronological, thematic, comparative, etc.)

Part 2: Structural Integrity

Introduction Section

- Contains an engaging **Hook** relevant to topic

- Provides necessary **Background/Context**

- **Thesis Statement** is prominently placed

- Includes a **Roadmap Sentence** (can be combined with thesis)

Category/Body Paragraphs (Complete for EACH category)

For Category _____:

- **Topic Sentence** clearly introduces category's focus

- **Evidence Points** (2-3 per category) are specified

- Each evidence point has **planned analysis/connection** noted

- **Transition/Link** to next category is indicated

- **Category-specific sources** are identified (for research papers)

Conclusion Section

- Begins with **Thesis Restatement** (in new words)

- **Synthesizes categories** (doesn't just list them)

- Articulates **"So What?" / Significance**

- Ends with a **strong final impression**

Part 3: Balance & Proportionality Check

Section	Target %	Your %	Status
Introduction	10-15%	____%	○
Category 1	20-25%	____%	○
Category 2	20-25%	____%	○
Category 3	20-25%	____%	○
Category 4	(if applicable) 15-20%	____%	○
Category 5	(if applicable) 15-20%	____%	○
Conclusion	10-15%	____%	○

Balance Assessment:

- No single category exceeds 30% of total word count

- Introduction and Conclusion together = 20-30% of total

- Middle categories are the most substantial

Part 4: Organizing Principle Consistency Test

Pattern Check: Complete this table for your categories:

Category	How it advances argument	Relationship to previous category
1. _____	_____	(N/A - foundation)
2. _____	_____	□ Builds on □ Contrasts □ Complicates
3. _____	_____	□ Builds on □ Contrasts □ Complicates
4. _____	_____	□ Synthesizes □ Evaluates □ Applies

Consistency Questions:

- All categories follow the same organizing principle (e.g., all thematic, all chronological)

- The sequence tells a logical story or builds an argument

- Categories are distinct but connected (not siloed)

- Transitions between categories are clear and purposeful

Part 5: Quality Evaluation

Category Distinctiveness Test

For each pair, ensure they're different enough:

- Category 1 vs. Category 2: Different focus? _____

- Category 2 vs. Category 3: Different evidence? _____

- Category 3 vs. Category 4 (if applicable): Different insight? _____

Evidence Quality Assessment

Per category, do you have:

- Variety in evidence types (not all the same kind)

- Strongest evidence in most important categories

- Analysis planned that connects evidence to thesis

- Sources are credible and appropriate (for research)

Argument Progression Check

- Early categories establish necessary foundation

- Middle categories develop complexity

- Final category provides synthesis, implication, or resolution

- The argument gets stronger/deeper as outline progresses

Part 6: Revision Flags

Check any that apply:

- **Thesis-Category Mismatch:** One category doesn't clearly support thesis

- **Overlap Alert:** Two categories cover similar ground

- **Weak Link:** Transition between categories is unclear

- **Evidence Gap:** Category lacks sufficient supporting points

- **Proportion Problem:** One section is disproportionately long/short

- **Conclusion Mismatch:** Conclusion doesn't address all categories

Part 7: Example Quality Benchmark

High-Quality Outline Example:

Topic: "The Renaissance's Impact on Modern Science"

- **Categories:** 1) Revival of Classical Texts, 2) Development of Empirical Methods, 3) Institutional Support (Universities/Patronage)

- **Progression:** Historical foundation → Methodological innovation → Structural analysis

- **Balance:** 25%/35%/30%/10% (Intro/Body/Conclusion)

- **Evidence:** Mix of primary sources, historian analyses, and specific examples

Compare Yours:

[ ] My categories show similar progression logic

[ ] My evidence is similarly varied and substantial

[ ] My balance is comparable

[ ] My conclusion similarly synthesizes rather than summarizes

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Final Verification

- **Read outline aloud** - does it flow logically?

- **Thesis test:** If someone only read your topic sentences, would they understand your argument?

- **Reverse outline:** Could someone reconstruct your outline from your thesis alone?

- **Peer sense-check:** Would the categories make sense to an intelligent reader?

Scoring & Next Steps

Score your outline: Give 1 point for each checked box in Parts 1-3

- **21-25 points:** Excellent - Ready to draft

- **16-20 points:** Good - Address flagged items first

- **11-15 points:** Needs work - Review organizing principle and balance

- **0-10 points:** Start over - Revisit category development worksheet

Priority Revision Areas:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Ready to Draft? [ ] Yes [ ] No - Need to fix: _____

_____

Save this completed checklist with your outline. Refer to it during drafting to maintain focus and structure.