

Blank Customizable Outline Template

Choose Your Numbering System and Customize for Any Purpose

OPTION A: ALPHANUMERIC NUMBERING SYSTEM

Use this format for traditional academic papers, essays, and reports

Paper Information

Title:

Author:

Course/Institution:

Date:

Word Count Target:

I. [First Major Section Title]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

-
-

Evidence/Examples:

-

Analysis:

B. [Second Subsection]

1. [First supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence
 - Additional information
2. [Second supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence
 - Additional information
3. [Third supporting point]

- Detail or evidence
- Additional information

C. [Third Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

Analysis:

1. [Sub-subsection if needed]

- a. [Detailed point]
- b. [Detailed point]
- c. [Detailed point]

2. [Sub-subsection if needed]

- a. [Detailed point]
- b. [Detailed point]

D. [Fourth Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

II. [Second Major Section Title]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

-
-

Evidence/Examples:

-

Analysis:

B. [Second Subsection]

1. [First supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence
 - Additional information
2. [Second supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence
 - Additional information

C. [Third Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

D. [Fourth Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

III. [Third Major Section Title]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

-

Evidence/Examples:

-

Analysis:

B. [Second Subsection]

1. [First supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence
2. [Second supporting point]
 - Detail or evidence

C. [Third Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

D. [Fourth Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

IV. [Fourth Major Section Title]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

-

Evidence/Examples:

-

Analysis:

B. [Second Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

C. [Third Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

V. [Fifth Major Section Title]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

-

Evidence/Examples:

-

Analysis:

B. [Second Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

C. [Third Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

VI. [Sixth Major Section Title - Optional]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

B. [Second Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

VII. [Seventh Major Section Title - Optional]

A. [First Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

B. [Second Subsection] Key point:

Supporting details:

Evidence/Examples:

Notes Section

Sources to consult:

-
-

Key quotes/data:

-
-

Ideas to develop:

-
-

OPTION B: DECIMAL NUMBERING SYSTEM

Use this format for technical documents, business reports, and formal academic papers

Paper Information

Title:

Author:

Organization/Institution:

Date:

Document Version:

1.0 [First Major Section Title]

Overview:

Purpose:

Key points:

-
-

1.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

-

Analysis:

1.1.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

-

1.1.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

-

1.1.3 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

1.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

Analysis:

1.2.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

1.2.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

1.3 [Third Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

1.4 [Fourth Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

2.0 [Second Major Section Title]

Overview:

Purpose:

Key points:

2.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

-

Analysis:

2.1.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

2.1.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

2.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

2.2.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

2.2.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

2.3 [Third Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

2.4 [Fourth Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

3.0 [Third Major Section Title]

Overview:

Purpose:

Key points:

3.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

3.1.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

3.1.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

Details:

3.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

3.3 [Third Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

4.0 [Fourth Major Section Title]

Overview:

Purpose:

4.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

4.1.1 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

4.1.2 [Detailed subsection] Specific point:

4.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

4.3 [Third Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

5.0 [Fifth Major Section Title]

Overview:

Purpose:

5.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

Evidence/Data:

5.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

5.3 [Third Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

6.0 [Sixth Major Section Title - Optional]

Overview:

6.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

6.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Supporting information:

7.0 [Seventh Major Section Title - Optional]

Overview:

7.1 [First Subsection] Main point:

7.2 [Second Subsection] Main point:

Appendices

A.1 [Appendix Title]

A.2 [Appendix Title]

A.3 [Appendix Title]

References/Bibliography

Format according to required citation style

CUSTOMIZATION GUIDE

How to Adapt This Template

Step 1: Choose Your Numbering System - Alphanumeric (I, A, 1, a) for traditional essays and humanities papers - Decimal (1.0, 1.1, 1.1.1) for technical documents and formal reports

Step 2: Determine Your Structure - How many major sections do you need? - How many subsections under each? - How deep should your hierarchy go?

Step 3: Name Your Sections - Replace “[Section Title]” with your actual section names - Be specific and descriptive - Ensure logical flow between sections

Step 4: Decide What Elements to Include - Keep elements that work for your purpose - Delete elements you don’t need - Add custom elements specific to your project

Common Paper Types and Suggested Sections

For Essay/Argumentative Paper: - I. Introduction (hook, background, thesis) - II. First Main Point - III. Second Main Point - IV. Third Main Point - V. Counter-arguments - VI. Conclusion

For Research Paper: - I. Introduction (context, literature review, research question) - II. Theoretical Framework - III. Methodology - IV. Results/Findings - V. Discussion - VI. Conclusion

For Lab Report: - I. Introduction - II. Materials and Methods - III. Results - IV. Discussion - V. Conclusion

For Business Report: - 1.0 Executive Summary - 2.0 Background/Context - 3.0 Analysis - 4.0 Recommendations - 5.0 Implementation Plan - 6.0 Conclusion

For Case Study: - I. Introduction - II. Background - III. Case Description - IV. Analysis - V. Solutions/Recommendations - VI. Conclusion

For Literature Review: - I. Introduction - II. Theme 1 - III. Theme 2 - IV. Theme 3 - V. Research Gaps - VI. Conclusion

Hierarchy Depth Guidelines

Use 2 levels (I, A) for: - Short papers (3-5 pages) - Simple topics - Basic essays

Use 3 levels (I, A, 1) for: - Medium papers (5-10 pages) - Moderate complexity - Most undergraduate papers

Use 4 levels (I, A, 1, a) for: - Long papers (10+ pages) - Complex topics - Graduate-level work

Use 5+ levels for: - Dissertations - Technical manuals - Comprehensive reports

Formatting Tips

Consistency is key: - Use same formatting style throughout - Parallel structure for similar items - Consistent verb tense within sections

Visual hierarchy: - Use bold, italics, or font size to show levels - Maintain clear indentation - Use white space effectively

Logical flow: - Each section should connect to the next - Include transition statements - Ensure sections support your main argument

Elements You Can Add

Evidence/Support: - Quotes from sources - Statistics and data - Examples and case studies - Expert opinions

Analysis: - Interpretation of evidence - Connection to thesis - Comparison with other sources - Implications

Transitions: - Between major sections - Between subsections - Within paragraphs

Visual Elements: - Tables - Figures - Charts - Diagrams

Quick Start Questions

Answer these to customize your outline:

- 1. What is your main argument or thesis?**
- 2. What are your 3-7 main supporting points?**
- 3. What evidence do you have for each point?**

4. What format is required? (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)
 5. What is your page length requirement?
 6. Who is your audience?
 7. What is your purpose? (inform, persuade, analyze, etc.)
-

BLANK WORKSPACE

Use this space to brainstorm before filling in the template

Main Topic/Question:

Thesis/Main Argument:

Key Points (list as many as needed): 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

Supporting Evidence for Each Point:

Point 1:

-
-

Point 2:

-
-

Point 3:

-
-

Point 4:

-

Point 5:

-

Sources to Use:

-
-
-
-

Key Terms to Define:

-
-

Questions to Address:

-
-

Counterarguments to Consider:

-

Conclusion Main Points:

-
-

CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETION

Before you start writing from your outline:

- ☐ All major sections have clear titles
 - ☐ Each section has a clear purpose
 - ☐ Evidence is noted for each claim
 - ☐ Sections flow logically from one to the next
 - ☐ Outline supports your thesis/main argument
 - ☐ Subsections are balanced (roughly equal depth)
 - ☐ You have enough content for your page requirement
 - ☐ All necessary components are included (intro, body, conclusion)
 - ☐ Sources are noted where needed
 - ☐ Formatting is consistent throughout
 - ☐ You've deleted sections you don't need
 - ☐ You've added any custom sections for your topic
 - ☐ Hierarchy makes sense (not too shallow or too deep)
 - ☐ Each section can be developed into paragraphs
 - ☐ Outline addresses all assignment requirements
-

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE OUTLINING

Start broad, then get specific: - Begin with major sections - Add subsections next - Fill in details last

Use parallel structure: - If Section I starts with a noun, others should too - Keep grammatical structure consistent - Makes outline easier to follow

Be flexible: - Outlines can change as you write - Move sections if needed - Add or remove as you develop ideas

Don't over-outline: - Outline should guide, not constrain - Some discovery happens during writing - Leave room for new ideas

Color coding (optional): - Use different colors for different types of information - Highlight completed sections - Mark areas needing more research

Save multiple versions: - Keep early drafts - Track changes as you develop - Revert if needed

Get feedback: - Share outline with instructor or peer - Confirm structure before writing - Easier to revise outline than full paper

Use outline as roadmap: - Each section = one or more paragraphs - Subsections = paragraph structure - Details = sentences within paragraphs

Remember: A good outline makes writing easier. Take time to develop it thoroughly before drafting!