

RESEARCH ESSAY OUTLINE MODEL

An outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, hierarchical (ranked) manner. Most students find that writing an outline *before* beginning the paper is most helpful in organizing one's thoughts. If your outline is good, your paper should be easy to write.

The basic format for an outline uses an alternating series of numbers and letters, indented accordingly, to indicate levels of importance. Here is an example of an outline on a paper about the development of Japanese theater:

I. Introduction

- A. Hook
- B. Thesis: Japanese theater rose from a popular to elite and then returned to a popular art form.

II. Early theatrical forms

- A. Bugaku
- B. Sarugaku
- C. Primitive Noh
- D. Authors and Audience

III. Noh theater

- A. Authors
- B. Props
 - 1. Masks
 - a. women
 - b. demons
 - c. old men
 - 2. Structure of Stage
- C. Themes
 - 1. Buddhist influence
 - 2. The supernatural
- D. Kyogen interludes
- E. Audience

IV. Kabuki

- A. Authors
- B. Props
 - 1. make-up
 - 2. special effects
- C. Themes
 - 1. Love stories
 - 2. Revenge
- D. Audience

V. Bunraku (puppet) theater

- A. Authors
- B. Props
- C. Themes
 - 1. Love stories
 - 2. Historical romances
- D. Audience

VI. Conclusion

- A. Restatement of thesis
- B. Summary of main points
- C. Sign-off, points to ponder

NOTES

The body follows the introduction, and breaks down the points the author wishes to make.

In this outline, II, III, IV, and V all have similar structure, but this will not necessarily be true for all papers. Some may only have three major sections, others more than the five given here.

Note that some sections have subdivisions, others do not, depending on the demands of the paper.

Not all sections will require as much depth as others. Some sections will only include enough content for a single paragraph, while other sections may cover several paragraphs.