

Research Outlines

- Outlines help control the flow of a paper. They provide a “skeleton” for the paper that help with organization and structure.
- Each point in an outline should relate back to the main topic and claim of the paper’s thesis statement. It should follow the organizing principle set up in the thesis. Each reason in the organizing principle constitutes its own argument, so each principle should have a separate paragraph or section within the paper.

Creating an Outline

- For example, use the thesis statement, “Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their **density**, **texture**, and **flavor**.”
 - Start each main point in an outline with a claim. The claim is the main argument that the paper will discuss. Then, add **reasons** to support this claim. The reasons work as the organizing principle that will help give the paper shape. As a result, the outline should follow the flow of the organizing principle.
 - Each numeral (I, II, III, etc.) should denote a separate paragraph or section of the paper. Use research to supply *evidence* that supports each **reason**.
- I. Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their **density**. **(Reason 1)**
 - A. People enjoy food with lighter density in the morning because it aids digestion.
 - i. Three different studies show that, in the morning hours, people will choose food with lighter density 75% of the time (Johnson 43). **(EVIDENCE)**
 1. Men tend to eat breakfast more often than women, however, women choose breakfast food with lighter density 87% of the time (King 134-35). **(EVIDENCE)**
 - II. Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their texture. **(Reason 2)**
 - A. In blind taste tests, people tend to prefer foods with more diverse texture.
 - i. Studies show that diverse texture in food is generally more pleasing than food with bland textures (Smith 34). **(EVIDENCE)**
 - ii. People who eat food with more complex textures tend to have better digestion (White 134). **(EVIDENCE)**
- It is helpful to include citations for each piece evidence within the outline to keep track of information and avoid plagiarism.
 - After they write their outline, writers can easily see the structure and argument of their paper. This aids writers by allowing them to move information around before they begin writing. It also helps writers by forcing them to examine the strength of their arguments. Once the argument is solidified, writing becomes much easier.