

Outlining

In my opinion, outlining is one of the most important stages of writing an article and should not be underestimated. It is an exceptional organizational tool for writing. An outline is not necessarily the same format that will be used for the table of contents; rather an outline organizes the article into smaller components and assists the author in creating the direction and flow of the article. If after writing the outline you realize that the concepts and ideas of the article are not explicit, rewrite the outline until the organization is clear and all of the concepts and ideas receive representation. An author who is sure of the direction of her article will be able to transform this clarity into clear writing. In order to know what to write in an article, you need to plan what to write.

I suggest using the following technique for writing an outline for an article .

1. Write the main sections of the article:

Write a paragraph describing the article remembering to use the [TSC paragraph structure](#) (topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence). Try to limit your paragraph to one sentence for the topic sentence, two to three sentences for the supporting sentences, and one sentence for the concluding sentence. You may want to add a sentence in order to understand the context of the essay before the topic sentence. The paragraph will become the basic structure of the article: The topic sentence can be part of the introduction. The topic sentence can be the introduction or first section; the supporting sentences can become the middle sections of the article; and the concluding sentence the conclusion. Develop each section to as many “tiers” of information or subsections without reviewing your research .

2. Write a paragraph for each section using the TSC structure. Divide each section accordingly into the relevant subsections—as they appear as sentences.

3. Review your research and reread the section and subsection division, determine if the subsections can be divided even further or if you have missed information .

4. Continue this process until you have determined that all the information necessary to write the essay is included and that the essay’s framework flows and is comprehensive. I suggest showing the outline to a friend or colleague and asking them to review the structure and offer comments.

5. After you are finished writing the outline, separate each section into a page and write down the key words for each section. Key words can be terms, acronyms, and abbreviations that will be used throughout the section or the essay to express a specific meaning. It is best to use key words that are common in that field of research. However, if there is no key word and you are creating one, make sure to explain this in the essay.

6. Writing down the key terms for each section allows the author to determine if the same words are used throughout the article, ensuring coherence and unity in writing and preventing the use of multiple terms and words for the same meaning that will likely confuse the reader. For instance, if

in Section I the author defines international humanitarian law as “IHL” but in Section III reverts back to using “international humanitarian law,” or if the author uses the term “socio-psychological coercion claims” interchangeably with “sociological and psychological research claims” without explaining that she is referring to the same concept, coherency in writing can be lost, and the audience may become confused. Noticing key term usage at this stage, will prevent making corrections in the editing stage

7. In each section note the literature and research that you will use in the section. This will allow you to make sure that when writing you do not forget to use important literature and research.

8. Review and refine the outline until it flows in a logical manner, is coherent, and expresses all subjects without being ambiguous and inexact.