Writing an Outline

An outline is a “blueprint” or “plan” for your paper. It helps you to organize your thoughts and arguments. A good outline can make conducting research and then writing the paper very efficient. Your outline page must include:

* Paper Title
* Thesis Statement
* Major points/arguments indicated by Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.)
* Support for your major points, indicated by capital Arabic numerals (i.e., A, B, C, D, E, etc.)

Roman numeral I should be your “Introduction”. In the introduction portion of your paper, you will want to tell your reader what your paper is about and then tell what your paper hopes to prove (your thesis). An Introduction gives an overview of the topic and your thesis statement.

The final Roman numeral should be your “Conclusion”. In the conclusion, you summarize what you have told your reader.

Here is a sample outline for the example given in the analytical thesis handout. YOUR outline may be MORE detailed, or may be LESS detailed. Remember that a good outline makes writing easier and more efficient.

**Title: John Brown’s Raid at Harpers Ferry**

**Thesis:** Although some may view John Brown as a terrorist in American history, he actually was a freedom fighter because his goal of ending slavery was a righteous one, he believed he was following the will of God, and he was willing to fight and die to end to slavery.

1. Introduction
2. The Issue
3. Historical Question: Was John Brown a Freedom Fighter or a Terrorist?
4. Thesis
5. John Brown’s righteous goal of ending slavery
6. Background of his goal
7. Primary Source Document: Theodore Parker, “John Brown’s Expedition”, November 24, 1859 (Include a sentence on how document will be used.)
8. Primary Source Document: John Gregory, "The Life and Character of John Brown," December 4, 1859 (Include a sentence on how document will be used.)
9. John Brown believed he was following the will of God
10. Background of his belief
11. Primary Source Document: James N. Gilbert, "A Behavioral Analysis of John Brown: Martyr or Terrorist?," 2005 (Include a sentence on how doc will be used.)
12. John Brown as a martyr
13. Background as a martyr
14. Primary Source Document: George Washington Brown, “A Martyr to Freedom,” December 17, 1859 (Include a sentence on how document will be used.)
15. Conclusion
16. Summarize arguments