

# Outlining

An outline helps you organize your ideas, presents your material in a logical form, shows the relationships among ideas in your writing, and constructs an ordered overview of your writing. There are two types of outline:



A **topic** outline uses words or phrases and has no punctuation after entries. A **sentence** outline uses complete sentences for all entries and has correct punctuation.

## RULES FOR OUTLINING

1. Place the title of your paper, centered, above the outline.
2. The thesis statement should appear between the title and Roman numeral I.
3. The main topics of the outline must correspond to the thesis statement.
4. Develop the main points of the body in the order that they are presented in the thesis.
5. The correct order of ideas should be:
  - I. Roman numerals = main topics or controls
    - A. Upper case letters = subtopics of main topic
    - B. Subtopic of main topic
  - II. Main topic
6. Since you cannot divide something into less than two, there must never be a lone subtopic under any topic. Every I must have a II; every A must have a B.
7. In writing the outline, entries of equal significance should be written in parallel form. For example, if entry I begins with a noun, all Roman numeral entries should begin with nouns. If entry A begins with a verb, all uppercase entries should begin with verbs.
8. The words "introduction," "body," and "conclusion" should not appear in an outline. They are not main topic words. The main topics (or Roman numerals) are the actual controls of your thesis.

## SAMPLE OUTLINE

**Thesis:** Eugene O'Neill's actual family relationships are reflected in Long Day's Journey into Night and A Moon for the Misbegotten.

### I. Relationships in Long Day's Journey into Night

#### A. Parents

- a.
- b.

#### B. Marriage

### II. Relationships in A Moon for the Misbegotten

#### A. Childhood

#### B. Marriage

- a.
  - 1.
  - 2.
- b.