



Once you have done some background research and have a specific and clearly-stated thesis statement (see “How to Write a Thesis Statement”) you can write a tentative outline of your research paper. An outline is a plan of how you will explain and support your thesis statement. It allows you to carefully plan the paper and organize it logically before you start writing. It’s also a useful tool to take to your teacher to make sure that you are on track before you start writing!

There are many ways to formulate an outline, depending on the depth of coverage you want to have in your research paper. The following is a sample guideline:

### I. INTRODUCTION

This is the place to introduce your reader to your paper. You want to capture his/her interest, clearly state your thesis statement, and briefly explain how you will support it. For example, your introduction could include:

- **an interest grabber:** something relevant to your topic that will capture your reader’s attention
- **a thesis statement:** your focus and opinion on the topic
- **a brief overview of support for the thesis statement:** you will expand each one of your supports or arguments in the body of the paper

### II. BODY

This is where you will present the arguments that support your thesis statement. You should present at least three arguments that explain why your thesis statement is correct and provide evidence for it. Here you can also criticize views that oppose your thesis statement. By presenting opposing views and defending your own view against them you are strengthening your argument and writing a well-balanced research paper! Your body could include:

- **a historical overview:** provide some background on your topic
- **the first argument:** start with your second-strongest argument/support for your hypothesis
- **the second argument:** this is your weakest support
- **the third argument:** here you want to use your strongest argument/support
- **opposing views:** present and discuss views that oppose your argument, providing evidence for why they are wrong and you are right

### III. CONCLUSION

In your conclusion you want to re-state your thesis statement and summarize your support for it. If possible, you also want to leave the reader with an interesting point for a further extension of the topic. In the conclusion you could:

- **restate/reword your thesis statement**
- **summarize your main arguments:** do a one sentence summary if possible
- **suggest an extension:** try to provide an interesting point that originates in your research paper that could make a potential extension or a topic for another research paper