

Conventions/Rules to Follow in Constructing an Outline:

In constructing a formal outline, keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Put the thesis at the top.
2. Use parallel grammatical structure for ideas at the same level of generality. (See E1.)
3. Use sentences unless phrases are clear.
4. Use the conventional system of numbers and letters for the levels of generality:

- I.
 - A.
 - B.
 - 1.
 2.
 - a.
 - b.
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (a)
 - (b)

II.

5. Always use at least two subdivisions for a category.
6. Limit the number of major sections in the outline; if the list of roman numerals grows too long, find some way of clustering the items into a few major categories with more subcategories.
7. Be flexible. Treat your outline as a tentative plan that may need to be adjusted as your drafts evolve.

Model for a Formal Outline

Outline Title

Thesis: Write the complete thesis statement sentence

- I. Introduction
 - A. Hook/Attention-getter
 - B. Background information connecting the listener to the subject
 - C. Thesis Statement
- II. First Body ¶: statement of idea for developing first main point from thesis. Do not use a source.
 - A. Supporting evidence—quote, paraphrase, statistic, or detail (cite source)
 - B. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
 - C. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
- III. Second Body ¶: statement of idea for developing second main point from thesis. Do not use a source.
 - A. Supporting evidence—quote, paraphrase, statistic, or detail (cite source)
 - B. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
 - C. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
- IV. Third Body ¶: statement of idea for developing third main point from thesis. Do not use a source.
 - A. Supporting evidence—quote, paraphrase, statistic, or detail (cite source)
 - B. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
 - C. Another piece of supporting evidence (same as above)
- V. Conclusion
 - A. Restate Thesis
 - B. Review of Main Points
 1. Restate your first main point
 2. Restate your second main point
 3. Restate your third main point
 - C. Return to hook for closure

2. Use a Card Rather Than a Slip of Paper

You'll find that your tendency to play with your notes will be reduced if you use a card. A piece of paper is easy to roll, bend, crunch, crumple, fold, unfold, and refold, distracting your audience from what you are saying, but the very stiffness of the card helps remind you not to play with your notes.

3. Limit the Number of Your Note Cards

Students ask, "How many cards should I use?"

You might want to consult your instructor, but because novice speakers often bring stacks of cards, even sheaves of papers, I find it an effective teaching technique to limit student speakers to only one card for a speech.

Of course, there is no guarantee that using just one card makes a successful speech or that using more than one card makes a speech automatically ineffective. But it is true that those speakers who step up to speak with a big supply of references often end up playing with their cards or just reading their speeches at the audience rather than talking with individuals in the audience. Hence, in this particular learning situation, you are urged to use only one note card.

4. Study an Example of a Good Note Card

Below is a copy of a note card (one card, two sides of it) a student prepared for his first speech in this course, the demonstration speech. It is an effective, useful note card; it uses tips presented in this lesson.

I. Introduction	1
A. Hawaii's gold is found on its beaches	
B. How to find shells	
II. Discussion	
A. Start early—be on beach at sunrise	
1. The need to be first	
2. Story of woman who camp there	
B. Make fast survey of large area (SHOW MAP)	
1. Check water's edge	
a. Large shells roll in (SHOW CONE)	
b. Kick up new sand	

2. Check high tide line ²	
a. Story of valuable shell found under floteam (SHOW CONE)	
b. Use of walking stick	
C. Concentrate on promising area	
1. Judging the beach	
2. Using screen (SHOW)	
a. In dry sand	
b. In damp sand	
c. In water	
III. Conclusion	
A. Be early, be fast, then concentrate	
B. Rewards of shell collecting (SHOW DISPLAYS)	

5. Use a Standard 3 × 5-Inch Note Card

A 3 × 5-inch card holds enough information to remind most speakers of what they're going to say, yet is not so large that it becomes cumbersome.

There are other benefits of the 3 × 5-inch size. It fits in the palm of your hand easily, while a large card has to be held between your fingers. Larger note cards will often seem to wave in a breeze when propelled by even minor shaking of your hand. And of course a full-sized piece of binder paper will, when held in the hand of a nervous speaker, flutter as if in a gale.

6. Hold the Card Vertically

More information will fit on your card if you write your notes across the narrow dimension. Reason: The outline form of a speech is usually longer than it is wide.

7. Use an Outline Form

If you have used an outline form to design your speech, as you've been urged, you've already started to implant that structure in your own mind. Hence, using the same form on your note card will help reduce your need to refer to your card as you speak.

Further, if you have your notes arranged in an organized, set pattern, you'll be able to find points on your card more easily when you need them. You won't have to read through relatively disconnected, unstructured material to remind yourself of what's next in your speech.

Finally, using an outline form on your note card will help you keep and present your ideas in a logical, structured form. Remember that your audience is much more likely to react as you wish if the structure of your speech is definite and clear to them.

8. Number Your Cards

If you're giving a longer speech, say, 15 minutes or so, you'll need more than just one card. When using more than one card, you'll find it simpler to write on only one side of each card. Then you won't have to be flipping cards over and back again to find your next point. And with more than one card, be sure to number them prominently.

9. Write out the First Sentence of the Introduction and Conclusion

Before I get up to speak, I worry about such things as being embarrassed by what the chair says in introducing me. Or if I'm giving an after-dinner speech, I worry about spilling the dessert on myself just before I get up to speak. Or I find some other potential calamity to worry about.

Such things almost never happen. But even if they do, I'm still prepared at least to begin my speech effectively: I write out the first sentence of the introduction to every speech I give. With that on my note card, my confidence is increased; my nervousness is decreased.