

## *Writing an Outline*

Organization is essential to writing a successful paper. Without it, the reader is unable to follow your thoughts. Writing a paper without a plan of action creates double the work because you'll find that your writing suffers from unnecessary repetition and lack of focus. Those are significant concerns that a bit of simple editing won't resolve, so the time to tackle organization is at the prewriting stage. Creating an outline is an effective way to organize your points without worrying about sentence structure, grammar, or punctuation. **Think of the outline as the skeleton of your paper. Without strong bones, the writing collapses.** Below is an example of what an outline for a typical college-level essay might look like.

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Background information (may include definitions, brief history about your topic, etc.)
- B. Thesis Statement (clearly states the **main point/idea** that you're developing in your paper)

### **II. Body Paragraph 1**

- A. Topic Sentence (expresses the main point of the paragraph, which supports the thesis)
- B. Supporting points (includes information from your research; must also include your own analysis)

**Repeat II** for each body paragraph. Depending on the length of the assignment, you may only need three body paragraphs or you may need many more. Each paragraph should be unified, meaning it should focus on one particular subtopic.

### **VII. Conclusion**

- A. Synthesize (restate your thesis in a new way, showing how the points you made and the support fit together)
- B. Answer the question, "so what?" Why should the reader care about what you wrote? Why does it matter? You may also want to suggest what future researchers should focus on in order to shed more light on your topic.