

VII. Write the Research Paper

Organization of Information

Now that you have gathered the pertinent information, it is time to organize it. The use of an outline can help you organize your material and discover connections between pieces of information that you weren't aware of initially. An outline can also make you aware of material that is not relevant to the paper. In writing your research paper, you may group your information by similar concepts. For example, if you are using the web to gather information, you may include them under a concept.

Outlines can be arranged according to their purposes, such as: the chronology of a historical development, the cause-and-effect relationship between different phenomena, the process by which something is accomplished, or the logic of some position. Are you defining or analyzing something, comparing or contrasting something, or presenting an argument?

Information is outlined by identifying main topics and subtopics. An outline may look like this:

The MLA Handbook suggests the following “descending parts of an outline”:

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

A rule to remember is that if you have an “A” in your paper, you need to have a “B”; and a “1” requires a “2”, and so on.

The following topic outline below is a sample taken from the 1994 MLA Handbook.

Using the Library and Other Information Sources

- I. Introduction to the library
 - A. Programs of orientation and instruction
 - 1. Pamphlets, handbooks, other materials

- 2. Orientation tours, lectures, courses
 - B. Books about the library (cite examples)
- II. The central catalog or central information system
- A. The online central catalog
 - 1. Definition and description
 - 2. Searching the online catalog
 - a. Searching by author, title, subject, keywords
 - b. Limiting the search
 - c. Using Boolean logic
 - (1) Definition of Boolean logic
 - (2) Examples of Boolean logic
 - 3. Information accessed from the online catalog
 - B. Information needed for research and writing
 - C. The card catalog and other catalogs
 - D. The central information systems
- III. Reference works
- A. Types of reference works
 - 1. Indexes
 - 2. Bibliographies
 - 3. Collections of abstracts
 - 4. Guides to research
 - 5. Dictionaries
 - 6. Encyclopedias
 - 7. Biographical sources
 - 8. Yearbooks
 - 9. Atlases
 - B. Publication forms of reference works
 - C. Searching a reference database
- IV. Location of library materials
- A. Classification systems
 - 1. Dewey decimal system
 - 2. Library of Congress system
 - B. Main collection (open shelves, closed stacks)
- and so forth....

Conclusion – knowledge of the library and successful research papers.

In this example, Using the Library and Other Information Sources is organized into four main topics: They are: **Introduction to the library, The central catalog or central information system, Reference works, Location of library materials.** Each of these main topics has two or more subtopics. For example, the first main topic (Introduction to

the library) contains two subtopics: Programs of orientation and instruction and Books about the library.