

# Economics 3905 Syllabus

## Modes of Learning: Written Communication Skills

### Jane Laird-Instructor

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The purpose of this course is to help you refine and improve your written academic communication skills. This class assumes that you will be writing a long paper for an economics course. If this is not the case, you will need to write a paper for this course or choose a paper assignment from another course, either past or current. The prerequisite for this class is that you have at least a *working knowledge of high school level English grammar and usage*. If this is not the case, taking a course that covers that specific material will be more beneficial and is highly suggested.

You will want to schedule a help session or contact me by phone or email for continuing assistance throughout the term. Office hours are then infinite. In addition, comprehensive writing resources available on the Internet are listed below so that you have all the tools you need to generate clear, clean, coherent and perfectly referenced academic papers. See below for how to submit your work, when it is due and how it is graded.

**There are four requirements for this course credit:** 1) Attend one class session. 2) Complete the attached *Homework* sheet. 3) Submit a draft version for review. 4) Submit a completed *Economics 3905 Draft Checklist/Outline/Thesis Statement* with the draft. For more details, see the table at the end of this syllabus. **Submissions:** Send your draft package (#3 and #4 by email to: [janeylaird@aol.com](mailto:janeylaird@aol.com)). Use Word or Wordpad formatting.

- ✚ **The package – draft, fully completed checklist, outline, thesis statement -- must be submitted together and be complete.**
- ✚ **Remember— if you do not get an acknowledgement that I received your submission, I did not get it.** Always follow up on these.

**Communication Element:** In addition, it is an ongoing requirement that you communicate and understand all of the following:

- When a paper has been emailed
- Any due date changes that become necessary
- When you need a help session or simply need a quick answer
- All pertinent questions and information
- All submissions must be identified with your name, contact phone number & email.
- I always respond to your messages and paper submissions to verify that I have received them. ***If you contact me via email or phone and do not get a response within one day, this means I did not get your message or your paper. Follow up on these.***

**Grading for this course:** attendance, 20%; draft submission, 40%; completed draft checklist/outline/thesis statement, 40%. The draft grade is based upon adherence to the checklist and outline, so these must be included in your submission. Remember, your submissions for Economics 3905 are not graded for content.

**Turnaround time:** I am guaranteeing a ten-day turnaround time for reviewing submissions, although I attempt to do this more quickly whenever possible. Please plan accordingly; properly identified email

submissions are the quickest way to turn something in.

<b>Economics 3905 Course Requirements</b>			
<b>Five Requirements</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade Percentage</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Attend the</b> scheduled class session	20%	<b>TBD</b>
<b>Homework</b>	Complete the <b>homework</b> assignment by doing each step on the homework sheet	Not Graded	<b>Aim for Friday, October 7</b> <i>You do not submit the Homework</i>
<b>Draft Checklist &amp; Outline Submission</b>	Submit a completed <b>Economics 3905 Draft Checklist, Thesis Statement and Outline</b> for a grade with the draft (see next)	40%	<b>Friday, November 11</b> <i>All these items must be submitted together. Your paper's draft package -- the draft, the <u>completed</u> checklist, an outline and the thesis statement -- will be due on this date unless you request an extension. Thank you!</i>
<b>Draft Submission</b>	Submit the <b>first draft version</b> for a grade by email in Word, WordPerfect or WordPad	40%	

# Economics 3905 Class Lecture Outline

**Introductory Paragraph** - Tell your audience what you are going to tell it; state the paper's purpose, or thesis, and explain what the paper will do. Introduce no specific information. Information that needs explanation or citations is too specific for an introduction.

## Main Body of Paper



### I. This Course

- A. Motivation for improving your academic writing skills
  - 1. For Yourself
  - 2. For your reader(s)
- B. Syllabus review
- C. Suggested Internet resources (*handout*)

### II. Writing Discussion

- A. Reference and Citation
  - 1. Anything not commonly known to audience needs a reference – do not forget that data from other sources, even if paraphrased and not in quotations, must always be referenced
  - 2. Must use a standard citation style consistently and correctly
  - 3. Crucial step with mandatory, strict adherence to all requirements
- B. Organization
  - 1. Outline techniques (*handout*)
  - 2. Paragraph structure (*handout*)
  - 3. Introductory Paragraph – see description above for required form
  - 4. Summary Paragraph– see description below for required form
- C. Formal Tone
  - 1. Third person only: do not use “I”, “we”, “you”, “us”, “my”, “our”, “your” and other first and second person references
  - 2. No clichés, jargon, slang, cute/casual phrases
  - 3. Objective viewpoint
  - 4. Do not use contractions
- D. Proofreading and Editing (*proofreading and editing handouts*)
- E. Pet Peeves – Avoid as these represent a major markdown
  - 1. *They* and other vague references
  - 2. “Words” with quotes around them that are not cited
  - 3. Paragraph structure (*handout*)
  - 4. Use of First or Second person

### III. Handout Review

- A. Homework
- B. Draft Checklist
- C. OWL Proofreading Steps
- D. Proofreading & Editing Symbols
- E. Outlining Handout
- F. Paragraph Construction Handout

### IV. Analysis and/or Conclusion

## End of the Main Body



**Summary Paragraph** - Tell your audience what you told it; introduce no new information. Analysis and conclusions are conducted within the body of the paper- not in the summary.

# A Selection of Internet Resources

## For Academic Writing

### Citation Style Guide Sources

*Research and Documenting Sources*, Purdue University Online Writing Lab:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html>  
*Resources for Documenting Electronic Sources* Purdue University Online Writing Lab  
[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_docelectric.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_docelectric.html)  
*American Economic Review: Style Guide*  
<http://www.aeaweb.org/aer/styleguide.html>  
*Citation Style for Research Papers*, Robert Delaney, Long Island University  
<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citation.htm>  
*Writer's Handbook*, UW-Madison Writing Center  
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>

### Dictionaries, Style Manuals, Grammar Handbooks, Editing Resources

*Resources*, Purdue University Online Writing Lab  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/internet/resources/sourceofinfo.html#style>

### Grammar Help

*Guide to Grammar and Writing*, Charles Darling, Capital Community Technical College  
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>  
*Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling*, Purdue University Online Writing Lab:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html>  
Grammar Bytes  
<http://www.chompchomp.com>

### How to Write a Thesis Statement

Indiana University Writing Lab:  
[http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml)  
Purdue University Online Writing Lab:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01>

### How to Outline

*Using Outlines*, Indiana University Writing Lab:  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/outlines.shtml>  
*How to Make an Outline*, University of Washington Psychology Writing Center:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/psywc/handouts/pdf/outline.pdf>

### How to Structure a Paragraph

*Paragraphs and Topic Sentences*, Indiana University Writing Lab:  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/paragraphs.shtml>  
*Paragraph Development and Topic Sentences*, Charles Darling, Capital Community-Technical College  
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/paragraphs.htm>

# Economics 3905 Homework

The following homework will not be collected or graded, but is necessary in order to complete your draft and draft checklist.

## I. Getting Started (1-2 Hours)

- A. Review **this syllabus** and make sure you thoroughly understand it
- B. Email or phone Jane if you have any questions about the syllabus
- C. Email Jane and **request an electronic copy of checklist if needed**
- D. Start filling in the **checklist**

## II. Read the Handouts and Internet Sources and Identify Weak Areas (5-10+ Hours)

*See next page for details on this part of the homework.*

- A. Carefully read the **OWL proofing strategies** and check your grammar/proofing/usage knowledge
- B. Carefully read the **Editing Symbols** handouts and check your proofing knowledge
- C. Carefully read the **Outlining handout** and check your outlining skills
- D. Carefully read the **Paragraph handout** and check your paragraph construction skills
- E. Carefully read the **Draft Checklist** and note anything you do not understand
- F. Locate and read **all of the Internet resource** sites identified in the course handout
- G. Identify which areas you need to work on from this review of all the above sources.
- H. Contact Jane and utilize the resources listed for help on all areas above

## III. Documentation and Citation of Sources (1-3 Hours)

- A. Consult the Professor for whom your paper is being written. Fill in the checklist with the Professor's name, course title and number
- B. Identify the citation style required by the Professor. Acquire a style guide from the Professor, the resources listed or Jane.  
(Self Check: Do you know what a *style guide* is?)
- C. If your Professor has no citation style preference, you may choose the style you prefer. Locate a source for your citation style and print out the style/format guide (you may use MLA as a default)
- D. Fill out the checklist by noting the documentation style you will be using.  
Fill out the checklist by identifying the book or internet site that you will be using to format your references and citations.
- E. Contact Jane for help if needed

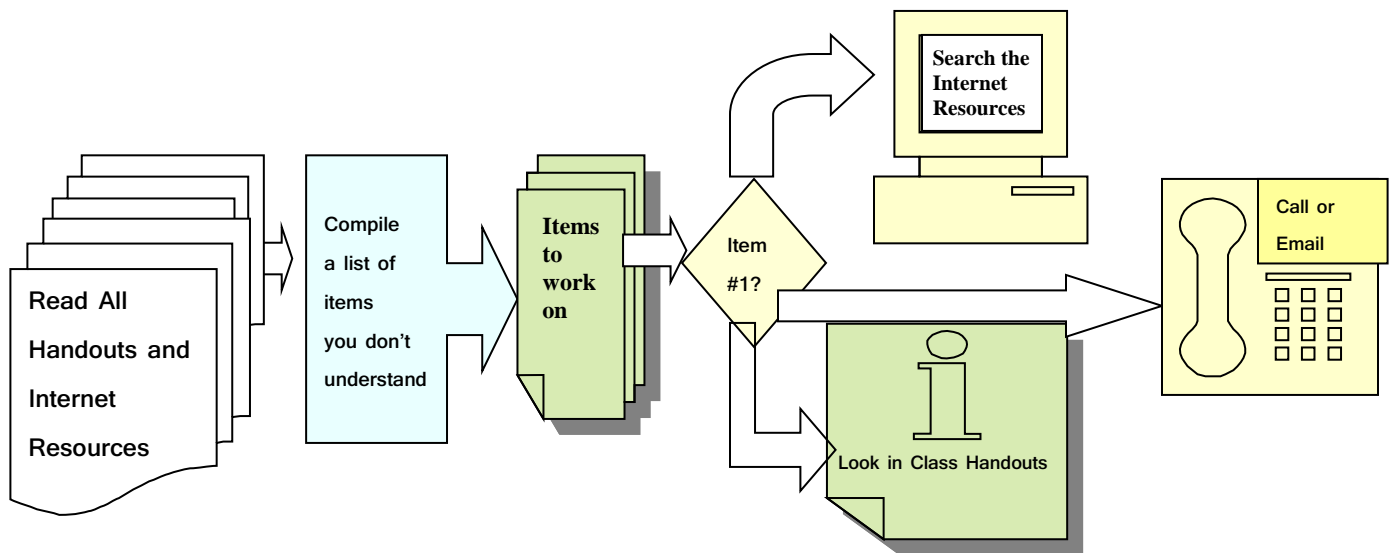
## IV. Identify Thesis Statement and Begin Outline

- A. Understand the assignment for the paper and begin identifying a thesis statement
- B. Begin an outline using the handout and other resources as a guide
- C. Contact Jane for assistance when stuck or confused or need a quick answer

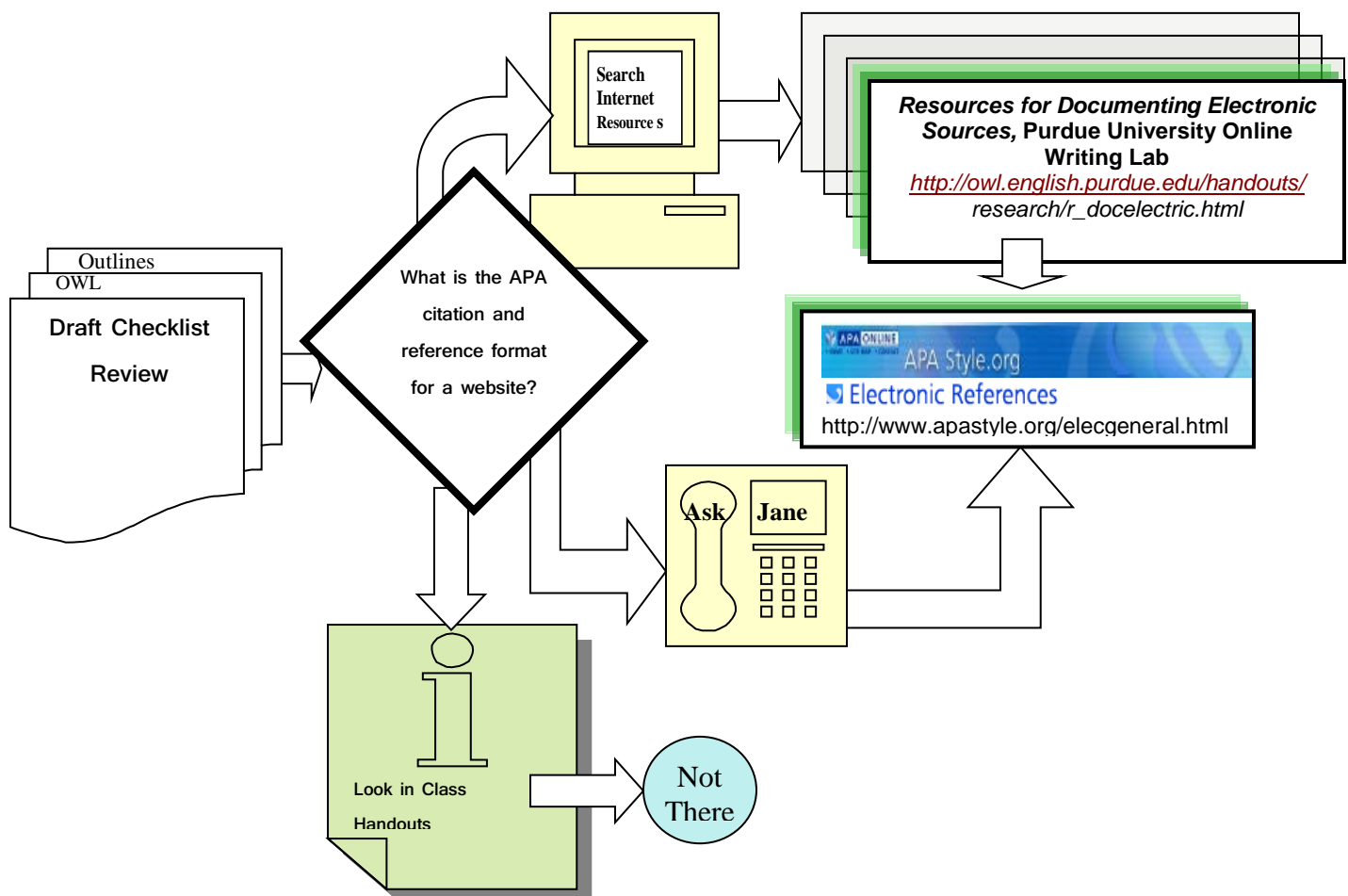
## V. Identify Possible Research Sources

- A. Begin to assemble sources for your paper
- B. Document all sources according to the chosen style using a style guide

# Steps for Homework Section II



## An example



# Economics 3905 Draft Checklist

## Written Communication Skills

Please email Jane at [janeylaird@aol.com](mailto:janeylaird@aol.com) for an electronic copy of this checklist (see homework sheet)

***This checklist must be filled out completely, attached to the outline and thesis statement and submitted with your draft. Completing and checking off each item is 40% of the course grade.***

**Fill out the following checklist for each item and submit it with your draft.**

1. Title and Professor of the course for which this paper is being written:
2. Your name, contact information (phone and email) is on the draft:
3. The title of this paper is on the draft:
4. An outline of this paper along with a statement of the paper's thesis is attached:
5. The paper has an introductory paragraph and a summary paragraph constructed as directed in the 3905 class session (see class outline for requirements):
6. **MANDATORY Reference, Citation and Source Documentation**
  - a. Missing source citations/reference documentation and incorrect reference formatting can cause markdowns from 5 to 25 points on your draft/final paper. **Check here to note that you understand how important this mandatory area is:**
  - b. Your professor requires what kind of reference documentation (MLA, Chicago, APA, other) OR what citation style have you chosen to use:
  - c. State what style guide you used (the source material for citation/reference format & style); what internet site or book source did you use:
  - d. You have checked the draft carefully to make sure that all material presented from another source—**quoted material, paraphrased material and ALL data from other sources**— is documented and cited:
  - e. All citations and references are constructed using proper punctuation, capitalization, page titles, data inclusion, spacing, etc:

### 7. Perfect Paragraph Construction in Logical Order

- All paragraphs have been reviewed to make sure they adhere to the paper's outline:
- All paragraphs are constructed logically; they have an initial thesis statement that all subsequent sentences in the paragraph support:

### 8. Maintaining Academic/Formal Tone

- The paper has been checked for objective tone, diction, and word choice:
- The paper contains no first or second person references:
- The paper contains no contractions:
- There are no clichés, trite expressions, or slang in this paper:

### 9. Double Check Jane's Pet Peeves as these are extra markdowns:

- Any use of the word *they* has been checked to make sure it refers to a plural noun:
- Any word/words quoted have a citation/reference:
- There are No first or second person references:
- Paragraphs are written as discussed in class and the handout provided (see #7 above):

### 10. There are No Spelling Errors, Typos and Missing Words

- The paper was checked by *Spellchecker* and *Grammar check*:
- You have also carefully checked the draft for misspellings, missing words and typos by reading the paper out loud or having someone else read through it for you:

### 11. This paper has been thoroughly proofed according to the standards presented by the *Purdue Online Writing Lab* handout; check your draft for each item below (use the OWL proofreading handout for details on each area):

- Statement of thesis
- Logical construction (according to your submitted outline)
- Coherence and Unity of exposition
- Diction (formal tone)
- Wordiness
- Capitalization is correct and consistent
- Dangling and misplaced modifiers
- Subject/verb agreement
- Pronoun reference/agreement
- Parallel sentence structure
- Punctuation
- Sentence Structure
  - compound sentences
  - introductory commas
  - comma splices
  - sentence fragments
  - run-on sentences

### 12. You have also checked each of these items:

- Possessives and plurals are correctly formed:
- Verb tenses and forms are correct? No switching of tense in paper?
- Sentence structure: do the sentences make sense?
- Word choice: are the word combinations used clear and unambiguous?
- All sentences have been checked to make sure they do not end in a preposition



# Jane's Compendium of Proofreading Abbreviations

This chart is a compilation by Jane Laird of proofreading and correction abbreviations used by a variety of proofreaders. Not all proofreaders will use all of the abbreviations here and some will have idiosyncratic notations that differ from below. Also note that the examples given contain *the error*. Check to see if you know how to correct these errors shown

Abbreviation	Meaning	Explanation and Error Examples
ab, abv	faulty abbreviation	check the spelling and punctuation
adj	improper use of adverb	adjectives modify nouns
adv	improper use of adverb	adverbs modify verbs. <i>Hopefully</i> is an adverb, for instance.
agr	agreement problem such as subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent	check that the verb form used or pronoun used is correct in agreement - see <i>pa</i> and <i>sv</i> and <i>n pro agr</i>
amb	ambiguous expression	the word choice does not convey a clear meaning and needs revision - see also <i>vag, wc, spec</i>
APA	APA format error	follow APA style guide
art	article	incorrect use of or missing either <i>a, an or, the</i>
awk	awkward expression or construction	the expression as written is difficult to understand, perhaps unwieldy due to a combination of errors, - rewrite and simplify
bf	bold face	use bold face type
bibl	bibliography format error	reference or citation format error; follow Chicago style guide
block	block format	format quotes of four lines or more in block form
c, ce, cf	comma error, fault	comma in the wrong place or other problem with a comma
cap	faulty or missing	proper nouns and the first word in a sentence require an initial

	capitalization	capital letter
<b>case, pro ca</b>	wrong pronoun case	use the correct pronoun for the different cases: subject, possessive, indirect object, direct object. The correct use of the words <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i> are good examples of this.
<b>cite</b>	citation missing or citation format error	check that there is a citation of the source used for the quote or information and that the citation is formatted according to a standard style
<b>cliché</b>	overused phrase	replace with original expression Ex: <i>Blown away by the calm before the storm, they were unable to judge a book by its cover.</i> @
<b>coh</b>	coherence	paragraph or set of sentences does not hold together logically - rewrite
<b>colloq</b>	colloquialism	do not use informal expressions in formal papers Ex: That scientist <i>ain't got no business</i> doing that. The researchers <i>gotta get real</i> .
<b>comp</b>	comparison problem	check for a mixed metaphor or nonsensical comparison. Ex: <i>Utah students are better than Texas</i> @
<b>contr, cntr</b>	contraction	<i>don=t</i> use contractions in formal writing
<b>cs</b>	comma splice	two complete sentences are joined with a comma; fix by splitting into two sentences <u>or</u> using a semi-colon <u>or</u> by using a comma and a conjunction.
<b>dc</b>	dependant clause	requires a comma
<b>del, dele, ∂, strike-marks</b>	delete	delete
<b>dict, d</b>	faulty diction	word choice that is incorrect in meaning or for the tone of the paper
<b>dgl, dm, dang</b>	dangling construction, dangling modifier	there is a dependent clause that modifies something not contained in the sentence, causing a nonsensical interpretation
<b>dms</b>	doesn't make sense	the sentence or expression is not understood – can be a combination of syntax, grammar and word choice problems - also see <i>usage, syn, ss, gr, mixed, om</i> Notice also that if a sentence does not make sense to the proofreader, she is unable to indicate a specific fix or correction.
<b>ex</b>	expand, explain further	expand your idea, give examples or analysis
<b>fig</b>		

	figurative language problem	Ex: AThe car was <i>as rapid as birds</i> .@
<b>frag, f</b>	fragment or incomplete sentence	complete sentences have a subject and a verb
<b>fuse, fs</b>	fused sentence	two or more complete sentences joined without punctuation; fix by using correct punctuation or by splitting into separate, complete sentences
<b>gr, gram, g</b>	grammar problem	general indication of grammar fault
<b>id, idiom</b>	deviation from a standard English combination of words	check that an informal idiom is worded appropriately, or phrasing follows standard idiomatic usage.
<b>i, inc</b>	incomplete thought or point	complete the thought, sentence, idea
<b>ital</b>	italicize	use <i>italicized</i> type
<b>lc</b>	use lowercase	Error IN Capitalization
<b>logic</b>	faulty logic	confused, illogical content
<b>marg, mar</b>	margin	check your margins
<b>MLA</b>	MLA format error	follow MLA style guide
<b>mm</b>	misplaced or misrelated modifier	modifier is placed in the sentence such that it causes a nonsensical interpretation - see also <i>dm</i>
<b>mood</b>	verb mood	use of imperative, subjunctive or indicative mood is faulty
<b>move *</b>	move to	move word/phrase to where location of the * see also <i>tr</i>
<b>mw</b>	missing word(s)	check for missing word or words
<b>n pr agr</b>	noun pronoun agreement	non-agreement between noun and pronoun - see also <i>pa</i>
<b>naw, ntwd, nsw</b>	not a word, no such word	not an English language word
<b>num</b>	error in use of number	check as some numbers are written numerically and some are spelled out
<b>om</b>	omission	a crucial word or phrase is missing

<b>omit</b>	omit	leave item out
<b>org</b>	organization	the writing of the paper or section is disorganized - rewrite using a logical outline
<b>&amp;, par</b>	new paragraph	start a new paragraph where indicated
<b>    or //</b>	problem in parallel form	sentence requires parallel treatment
<b>p/a, pa, pn</b>	pronoun/antecedent agreement, pronoun number error	pronoun used does not match the noun it modifies
<b>pers</b>	person	do not needlessly shift, or hopscotch about, between first, second, third person
<b>pl</b>	plural	needs plural form; problem with use of plural form
<b>poss</b>	problem with possessive case	usually have used a possessive where a plural is required or the reverse - check also if there is an error with the apostrophe
<b>pov, per, s/p</b>	point of view, shift in person	do not shift person or point of view without a logical reason
<b>prep</b>	preposition	incorrect or missing preposition --do not needlessly end sentences with a preposition
<b>prop</b>	proper noun	need to treat as a proper noun
<b>pron, pr</b>	pronoun	pronoun used incorrectly
<b>p</b>	punctuation	incorrect or missing comma, period, apostrophe, quotation mark, or other form of punctuation
<b>red</b>	redundant word(s) or ideas	Ex: <i>∆red in color,∆ ∆thought in my head∆</i>
<b>ref</b>	unclear pronoun reference	there is a vague or ambiguous reference
<b>r, rep</b>	unnecessary repetition repetitious writing	a word or idea or sentence is overly repeated
<b>rep w</b>	repeated word	Example: <i>∆This is is a well done compendium.∆</i>

<b>r-o, r/o, ro, run</b>	run-on sentence	too many complete sentences contained in one sentence. Split up and rewrite.
<b>sc</b>	subordinate clause	check whether there is a comma after the clause
<b>shift t, s/t, st</b>	shift in tense	there is an inconsistency in verb tense used and must be fixed
<b>si</b>	split infinitive	⚠To erroneously <i>split</i> infinitives is <i>to</i> cautiously <i>be</i> avoided⚠
<b>sing, sg</b>	singular	convert to singular form or person
<b>slang, sl</b>	slang	do not use slang or casual phrases in formal writing Ex: ⚠There was a <i>fat chance</i> that the Congress would <i>hang tough</i> .⚠ ⚠The interviewees were <i>far out and real gone hepcats</i> .⚠
<b>sp</b>	spelling error	find and fix the spelling error
<b>spec</b>	be specific or specify	avoid generalizations or vague word choices - see also <i>amb, vag, wc</i>
<b>s/pl, s-pl</b>	singular/plural	problem with singular plural agreement
<b>- s</b>	missing or incorrect final -s	check for plural, possessive, verb tense
<b>ss, sc, syn, syntax</b>	faulty sentence structure, sentence construction syntax problem	there is a problem with the construction of an English sentence
<b>stet</b>	let it stand	no correction necessary
<b>sv agr, s agr, s/v, sv, s-v agr</b>	subject/verb agreement	verb use or form is not correct for the subject it describes
<b>t, tns</b>	verb tense problem	switching the verb tense in a sentence or section or using the wrong verb tense. See also <i>t seq</i>
<b>tr, tsp, ^</b>	transpose elements	requires a switch in the order of the words - also see <i>move</i>
<b>trans</b>	transition	there is a faulty or missing transition word or phrase
<b>tr, trite</b>	trite expression	the phrase used is formulaic, conventional, over used EX:⚠He <i>proceeded</i> to have a <i>meteoric climb</i> for <i>this day and age</i> ⚠
<b>TS</b>	thesis statement	check the thesis statement to make sure it conveys the meaning of

		the information presented in the paper
<b>ts, top s</b>	topic sentence	check the topic sentence to make sure it conveys the meaning of the information presented in the paragraph
<b>t seq</b>	tense sequence	the tense sequence is confusing or nonsensical - check to see that the tenses are consistent and logical
<b>unity</b>	unity	the paragraph does not hold together logically - rewrite
<b>und</b>	underline	<u>underline</u>
<b>uncl, unclear</b>	unclear	word choice fails to convey a clear meaning - see also <i>wc, amb, vg</i>
<b>u, use, ns</b>	English usage, nonstandard	something about the phrasing, word order, grammar or sentence structure constitutes nonstandard English usage
<b>v, var</b>	variety	use a more varied vocabulary, sentence length or type
<b>vag, vg</b>	vague	use a more precise word choice or more details - see <i>also spec, amb, wc</i>
<b>v pass, voice</b>	incorrect use of active or passive voice	Ex: <i>English is understood by us</i>
<b>vt</b>	verb tense	check a problem with a verb tense
<b>vf, vb, v</b>	wrong verb form	there is something wrong with the tense, mood, agreement or verb form
<b>wc</b>	word choice	need a more precise word - see also <i>vag, spec</i>
<b>wdy</b>	wordy	simplify and cut out unnecessary words
<b>wf</b>	word form	word is correct but in wrong form
<b>wo</b>	word order	faulty word order see also <i>syntax, use</i>
<b>ww, w</b>	wrong word	Ex: using <i>effect</i> instead of <i>affect</i>
<b>x, X</b>	incorrect	marks something that is wrong
<b>3PO</b>	third person only	use third person only in formal writing - change first and second

		person references to third
/, ☑, Y	check	good, correct
^	insert	add at the mark
#	add a space	need a space at the mark
?, ??, huh?,	question	something is not understandable to reader; check usage, sentence structure, word choice and all else to determine how to fix. See also <i>dms</i>



# *Editing and Proofreading Strategies for Revision*

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

For more information on proofreading, see OWL's other handouts on the subject:

- 1 Steps in Editing at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_stepedit.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_stepedit.html)
- 2 Proofreading Strategies at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_edit.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_edit.html)
- 3 Proofreading Your Paper at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_proof2.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_proof2.html)

## For working on larger issues

Once a rough draft is finished, you should try to set it aside for at least a day and come back to the paper with a fresh mind and thus more easily catch the errors in it. You'll bring a fresh mind to the process of polishing a paper and be ready to try some of the following strategies.

### Read the Paper Aloud

If we read the paper aloud slowly, we have two senses--seeing AND hearing--working for us. Thus, what one sense misses, the other may pick up.

### Check the Thesis Statement and Organization

Write down your thesis on a piece of paper if it is not directly stated in your essay. Does it accurately state your main idea? Is it in fact supported by the paper? Does it need to be changed in any way? On that piece of paper, list the main idea of each paragraph under the thesis statement. Is each paragraph relevant to the thesis? Are the paragraphs in a logical sequence or order?

### Remember that You are Writing for Others

No matter how familiar others may be with the material, they cannot "get inside" your head and understand your approach to it unless you express yourself clearly. Therefore, it is useful to read the paper through once as you keep in mind whether or not the student or teacher or friend who will be reading it will understand what you are saying. That is, have you said exactly what you wanted to say?

### Check the Paper's Development

Are there sufficient details? Is the logic valid?



## Check the Paper's Coherence and Unity

Are the major points connected? Are the relationships between them expressed clearly? Do they all relate to the thesis?

## Review your Diction

Remember that others are reading your paper and that even the choice of one word can affect their response to it. Try to anticipate their response, and choose your words accordingly.

*Original:* The media's exploitation of the Watergate scandal showed how biased it was already.

*Revision:* The media's coverage of the Watergate scandal suggests that perhaps those in the media had already determined Nixon's guilt.

In addition to being more specific, the revision does not force the reader to defend the media. In the first example, though, the statement is so exaggerated that even the reader who is neutral on the issue may feel it necessary to defend the media. Thus, the writer of the original has made his job of persuading the reader that much harder.

## For working on sentence and word-level issues

No matter how many times you read through a "finished" paper, you're likely to miss many of your most frequent errors. The following guide will help you proofread more effectively

### General Strategies

! Begin by taking a break. Allow yourself some time between writing and proofing. Even a five-minute break is productive because it will help get some distance from what you have written. The goal is to return with a fresh eye and mind.

! Try to s-l-o-w d-o-w-n as you read through a paper. That will help you catch mistakes that you might otherwise overlook. As you use these strategies, remember to work slowly. If you read at a normal speed, you won't give your eyes sufficient time to spot errors:

! Reading aloud. Reading a paper aloud encourages you to read every little word.

! Reading with a "cover." Sliding a blank sheet of paper down the page as you read encourages you to make a detailed, line-by-line review of the paper.

### Personalize Your Proofreading

You won't be able to check for everything (and you don't have to), so you should find out what your typical problem areas are and look for each type of error individually. Here's how:

1. Find out what errors you typically make. Review instructors' comments about your writing and/or review your paper(s) with a Writing Lab tutor.
2. Learn how to fix those errors. Talk with your instructor and/or with a Writing Lab tutor. The instructor and the tutor can help you understand why you make the errors you do so that you can learn to avoid them.
3. Use specific strategies. Use these strategies to find and correct your particular errors in usage and sentence structure, and spelling and punctuation.

## Check your Writing for Abstract Subjects, Particularly Those you have Combined with Passive Verbs

Try substituting concrete or personal subjects with active verbs.

*Original:* More attractiveness is sometimes given an act when it is made illegal.

*Revision:* When an act becomes illegal, some people find it more attractive.

## Cut out Wordiness Wherever Possible

*Original:* They are desirous of ...

*Revision:* They want ...

## Use Active Verbs

Since verbs tend to carry the meaning of your sentences, use the most precise and active ones possible. Thus, avoid constructions using the various forms of the verb "to be."

*Original:* Inflation is a threat to our economy.

*Revision:* Inflation threatens our economy.

## Avoid Using Stretcher Phrases such as "It Is" and "There Are," Unless Needed for Emphasis

Remember the need for strong verbs.

*Original:* There were several reasons for the United States' entrance into the war.

*Revision:* The United States entered the war for several reasons.

## Replace Colloquialisms with Fresh and more Precise Statements

Because colloquialisms tend to be used so often, they also are not very precise in meaning. A hassle, for example, can be an annoyance, an argument, or a physical fight.

*Original:* Her behavior flipped me out.

*Revision:* Her behavior first stunned, then delighted me.

## Review your Sentences . . .

Be sure that no parts of the paper are "short and choppy"; be sure that the rhythm of your paper is not interrupted, except for a good reason, like emphasis. A good way of smoothing out such a problem is to try combining sentences, and in so doing showing the relationship between them.

*Original:* The best show in terms of creating a tense atmosphere is "Jeopardy." This is probably the most famous of all games shows. It is my favorite show.

*Revision:* The best show in terms of creating a tense atmosphere is "Jeopardy," which is also probably the most famous of all game shows and my favorite.

## *For Usage and Sentence Structure*

### **For subject/verb agreement:**

1. Find the main verb in each sentence.
2. Match the verb to its subject.
3. Make sure that the subject and verb agree in number.

### **For pronoun reference/agreement:**

1. Skim your paper, stopping at each pronoun. Look especially at *it*, *this*, *they*, *their*, and *them*.
2. Search for the noun that the pronoun replaces. If you can't find any noun, insert one beforehand or change the pronoun to a noun. If you can find a noun, be sure it agrees in number and person with your pronoun.

**See the OWL handout on pronouns at**

**[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_pronuse.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_pronuse.html).**

**For parallel structure:**

1. Skim your paper, stopping at key words that signal parallel structures. Look especially for the following: and, or, not only...but also, either... or, neither...nor, both...and.
2. Make sure that the items connected by these words (adjectives, nouns, phrases, etc.) are in the same grammatical form.

**For more information, see the OWL handout on parallel structure at**

**[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_parallel.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_parallel.html).**

*For Spelling and Punctuation*

**For spelling:**

1. Examine each word in the paper individually. Move from the end of each line back to the beginning. Pointing with a pencil helps you really see each word.
2. If necessary, check a dictionary to see that each word is spelled correctly.

**For more information, see the OWL handouts on spelling at**

**<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/#spelling>.**

**For compound sentence commas:**

1. Skim for conjunctions: and, but, for, or, nor, so and yet.
2. See whether there is a complete sentence on each side of the conjunction. If so, place a comma before the conjunction.

**For more information, see the OWL handout compound sentence commas at**

**[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_commacomp.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_commacomp.html).**

**For introductory commas:**

1. Skim your paper, looking only at the first two or three words of each sentence.
2. Stop if one of these words is a dependent marker, a transition word, a participle, or a preposition.
3. Listen for a possible break point before the main clause.
4. Place a comma at the end of the introductory phrase or clause (which is before the independent clause).

**For more information, see the OWL handout on commas after introductions at**

**[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_commaint.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_commaint.html).**

**For comma splices:**

1. Skim the paper, stopping at every comma.
2. See whether there is a complete sentence on each side of the comma. If so, add a

coordinating conjunction after the comma or replace the comma with a semicolon.

**For more information, see the OWL handout on commas at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_comma.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_comma.html).**

**For fragments:**

1. Look at each sentence to see whether it contains an independent clause.
2. Pay special attention to sentences that begin with dependent marker words (such as "because") or phrases such as "for example" or "such as."
3. See if the sentence might be just a piece of the previous sentence that mistakenly got separated by a period.

**For more information, see the OWL handout on sentence fragments at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_frag.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_frag.html).**

**For run-on sentences:**

1. Review each sentence to see whether it contains more than one independent clause. Start with the last sentence of your paper, and work your way back to the beginning, sentence by sentence.
2. Break the sentence into two sentences if necessary.

**See the OWL handout on comma splices at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_commaproof.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_commaproof.html).**

**For left-out words:**

1. Read the paper aloud, pointing to every word as you read. Don't let your eye move ahead until you spot each word.
2. Also, make sure that you haven't doubled any words.

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## Paragraphs and Topic Sentences

A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent, and are all related to a single topic. Almost every piece of writing you do that is longer than a few sentences should be organized into paragraphs. This is because paragraphs show a reader where the subdivisions of an essay begin and end, and thus help the reader see the organization of the essay and grasp its main points.

Paragraphs can contain many different kinds of information. A paragraph could contain a series of brief examples or a single long illustration of a general point. It might describe a place, character, or process; narrate a series of events; compare or contrast two or more things; classify items into categories; or describe causes and effects. Regardless of the kind of information they contain, all paragraphs share certain characteristics. One of the most important of these is a topic sentence.

### TOPIC SENTENCES

A well-organized paragraph supports or develops a single controlling idea, which is expressed in a sentence called the topic sentence. A topic sentence has several important functions: it substantiates or supports an essay's thesis statement; it unifies the content of a paragraph and directs the order of the sentences; and it advises the reader of the subject to be discussed and how the paragraph will discuss it. Readers generally look to the first few sentences in a paragraph to determine the subject and perspective of the paragraph. That's why it's often best to put the topic sentence at the very beginning of the paragraph. In some cases, however, it's more effective to place another sentence before the topic sentence—for example, a sentence linking the current paragraph to the previous one, or one providing background information.

Although most paragraphs should have a topic sentence, there are a few situations when a paragraph might not need a topic sentence. For example, you might be able to omit a topic sentence in a paragraph that narrates a series of events, if a paragraph continues developing an idea that you introduced (with a topic sentence) in the previous paragraph, or if all the sentences and details in a paragraph clearly refer—perhaps indirectly—to a main point. The vast majority of your paragraphs, however, should have a topic sentence.

### PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

Most paragraphs in an essay have a three-part structure—introduction, body, and conclusion. You can see this structure in paragraphs whether they are narrating, describing, comparing, contrasting, or analyzing information. Each part of the paragraph plays an important role in communicating your meaning to your reader.

**Introduction:** the first section of a paragraph; should include the topic sentence and any other sentences at the beginning of the paragraph that give background information or provide a transition.

**Body:** follows the introduction; discusses the controlling idea, using facts, arguments, analysis, examples, and other information.

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**Conclusion:** the final section; summarizes the connections between the information discussed in the body of the paragraph and the paragraph's controlling idea.

The following paragraph illustrates this pattern of organization. In this paragraph the topic sentence and concluding sentence (CAPITALIZED) both help the reader keep the paragraph's main point in mind.

SCIENTISTS HAVE LEARNED TO SUPPLEMENT THE SENSE OF SIGHT IN NUMEROUS WAYS. In front of the tiny pupil of the eye **they put**, on Mount Palomar, a great monacle 200 inches in diameter, and with it see 2000 times farther into the depths of space. **Or they look** through a small pair of lenses arranged as a microscope into a drop of water or blood, and magnify by as much as 2000 diameters the living creatures there, many of which are among man's most dangerous enemies. **Or**, if we want to see distant happenings on earth, **they use** some of the previously wasted electromagnetic waves to carry television images which they re-create as light by whipping tiny crystals on a screen with electrons in a vacuum. **Or they can bring** happenings of long ago and far away as colored motion pictures, by arranging silver atoms and color-absorbing molecules to force light waves into the patterns of original reality. **Or** if we want to see into the center of a steel casting or the chest of an injured child, **they send** the information on a beam of penetrating short-wave X rays, and then convert it back into images we can see on a screen or photograph. **THUS ALMOST EVERY TYPE OF ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION YET DISCOVERED HAS BEEN USED TO EXTEND OUR SENSE OF SIGHT IN SOME WAY.**

George Harrison, "Faith and the Scientist"

## COHERENCE

In a coherent paragraph, each sentence relates clearly to the topic sentence or controlling idea, but there is more to coherence than this. If a paragraph is coherent, each sentence flows smoothly into the next without obvious shifts or jumps. A coherent paragraph also highlights the ties between old information and new information to make the structure of ideas or arguments clear to the reader.

**Along with the smooth flow of sentences, a paragraph's coherence may also be related to its length. If you have written a very long paragraph, one that fills a double-spaced typed page, for example, you should check it carefully to see if it should start a new paragraph where the original paragraph wanders from its controlling idea. On the other hand, if a paragraph is very short (only one or two sentences, perhaps), you may need to develop its controlling idea more thoroughly, or combine it with another paragraph.** (Emphasis added by Jane)

*Rule: It takes  
three sentences  
to make a*

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## Using Outlines

Many writers use an outline to help them think through the various stages of the writing process. An outline is a kind of graphic scheme of the organization of your paper. It indicates the main arguments for your thesis as well as the subtopics under each main point. Outlines range from an informal use of indenting and graphics (such as —, \*, +) to a formal use of Roman numerals and letters. Regardless of the degree of formality, however, the function of an outline is to help you consider the most effective way to say what you want to say.

Outlines usually grow out of working plans for papers. For shorter, less complex papers, a few informal notes jotted down may be enough. But longer papers are too big to organize mentally; you generally need a more systematic plan to organize the various parts of the paper. Preparing an outline will help you think over your notes, consider them from several perspectives, and devise/revise an organizational plan appropriate to your topic, audience, and assignment. An outline that accompanies the final draft of a paper can also function as a table of contents for the reader.

When you think of outlines, you usually think of an organizational plan to help you draft a paper, but you can outline at any one of the several stages of the writing process. At each stage, the outline serves a different function and helps you answer different writing questions:

### USING OUTLINES IN RESEARCH

While you are researching a topic, you can make a tentative outline--a plan for your paper based on what you are learning from your research. This kind of outline helps you answer the questions: What do I know a lot about already? What do I need to research more?

Here is an example of a tentative outline a student used to begin doing research for an essay comparing three different political theories: neo-Marxism, pluralism, and elitism. The writer already knew about two of the theories, but needed more information about the third.

#### **Neo-Marxism**

- power to minority
- emphasizes economics

#### **Pluralism**

- power to interest groups
- shifting coalitions of groups

#### **Elitism**

- definition
- description

#### **Analysis: United States**

- neo-Marxist
- pluralist
- elitist

## PRE-WRITING WITH OUTLINES

During pre-writing, you can make a working outline--an outline that guides you in your drafting. It helps you answer the question: How am I going to present my information, given my thesis, my assignment and my audience?

The student who wrote the tentative outline above also wrote the one below before beginning her essay. She wanted to describe the three political theories and then compare them by using each to analyze the government of a particular country, arguing that neo-Marxism is the most useful theory. Her working outline isn't very formal, but it fulfills the functions of a good outline.

It supports the thesis.

It establishes the order and relationship of the main points.

It clarifies the relationship between the major and minor points.

Here's what the student's second outline looked like:

- \* **Introduction**
  - theories are simpler than real life
  - theories are tools
- \* **Three Political Theories**
  - Neo-Marxism
    - power to minority
    - importance of economic control
  - Pluralism
    - power to interest groups
    - interest groups form coalitions
  - Elitism
    - power to elite
    - how elite is defined
- \* **Compare analysis of United States**
  - Neo-Marxist
  - Pluralist
  - Elitist

Your job as the writer is to think through the relationship between your ideas. For example, is one idea similar to or different from another? Is one a cause of another? An effect? An example? Is one idea the solution to another? Do two points represent different categories of a larger idea? In other words, do your ideas fall into one of the conventional approaches to thinking about an issue: cause-effect, problem-solution, comparison-contrast, definition, classification? You can use these standard approaches to help you think through your ideas and come up with a logical plan. That plan then becomes your outline.

While drafting, you can make a draft or descriptive outline--an outline that is based on your draft. It describes each of your paragraphs so that you can critique your organization. It helps you answer the questions: Does my draft flow logically from point to point? Have I discussed similar ideas in the same section or do I seem to jump around?

This is a draft outline the above-mentioned student made after writing the first draft of her paper. She summarized the draft, paragraph by paragraph, and then took a look at what the outline revealed.

Paragraph 1 -- General introduction to political theories, Thesis: neo-Marxism most useful

Paragraph 2 -- Description of neo-Marxism Paragraph 3 -- Description of pluralism

Paragraph 4 -- Coalitions of interest groups



Paragraph 5 -- Description of elitism

Paragraph 6 -- Pluralist analysis of U.S.

Paragraph 7 -- Neo-Marxist analysis of U.S.

Paragraph 8 -- Strengths of neo-Marxist analysis, Weaknesses of neo-Marxism and Pluralism

Paragraph 9 -- Weaknesses of elitism

Paragraph 10 -- Conclusion

She noticed that the descriptions of neo-Marxism and elitism were each in a single paragraph, but the description of pluralism took two paragraphs. She decided to be consistent by combining paragraphs 3 and 4. She also noticed that the second half of the paper seemed to jump around from theory to theory, presenting each theory's analysis and then each theory's weaknesses. She decided to put the pluralist analysis of the U.S. and the weaknesses of the analysis together in paragraph 6, the elitist analysis and its weaknesses into a paragraph together, and then devote two paragraphs to the neo-Marxist analysis and its strengths and weaknesses.

### **MAKING AN OUTLINE TO HAND IN**

Finally, you may also be required to write a formal outline--an outline that serves as a guide to your paper for your reader. If you haven't already been making formal outlines, this outline will be a formal version of your previous notes; it lays out your main points and subpoints for your reader. Generally, this kind of outline uses conventions of formal outlining: Roman numerals, letters and indentations. Sometimes this sort of outline can be produced after you have written your essay.

Formal outlines can be written in two ways. In topic outlines, the ideas are expressed in parallel phrases (in other words, they are expressed in the same grammatical form--as noun phrases, as verb phrases, etc.). Topic outlines have the advantage of being brief. In sentence outlines, on the other hand, the ideas are expressed in complete, though not necessarily parallel, sentences. Sentence outlines give the reader a clearer idea of what you will argue.

**Notice in a formal outline, whenever a point is subdivided, there are at least two subpoints. Logic and convention state that when you divide a point, you can divide it into no fewer than two subpoints.** (Emphasis added by Jane)

**Regardless of the kind of formal outline you choose, convention states that you begin with a statement of your thesis and indicate increasing levels of support in this order: I., A., 1., a., (1), (a).** (Emphasis added by Jane)

In scientific papers, however, a decimal system is also commonly used. A topic outline follows:

Thesis: Among the pluralist, elitist, and neo-Marxist political theories, neo-Marxism provides the most powerful analysis of the current political scene.

- I. Functions of political theories
  - A. Tools to help understand governments
    - 1. Categorization
    - 2. Comparison
  - B. Limitation: Over-simplification
- II. Three political theories
  - A. Neo-Marxism

- 1. Definition
    - 2. Description
  - B. Pluralism
    - 1. Definition
    - 2. Description
  - C. Elitism
    - 1. Definition
    - 2. Description
- III. Comparative analysis of U.S. government
  - A. Pluralism
    - 1. Analysis
    - 2. Weaknesses
  - B. Elitism
    - 1. Analysis
    - 2. Weaknesses
  - C. Neo-Marxism
    - 1. Analysis
    - 2. Critique
      - a. Strengths
      - b. Weaknesses
- IV. Conclusion

Remember, depending on how your research or writing is going, you may need to make use of any or all of the outlines described in this article.

*Produced by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN*

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