

Starting a Paper: Breaking it Down

Outlining: This is one of the most basic, and simplest, ways to start a research paper. This can be done in a variety of ways, there is no right or wrong way to outline! There are formal outlines, bubble outlines, and stream of consciousness lists; there are many examples online, and it might take a bit to find the style that works for you. Try to mix and match even, the only goal is to get the ideas that are similar grouped together so that the paper flows logically without jumping around.

Thesis Statements: These are the guide for the entire paper, and can be thought of as the essence of the paper in a single sentence. There are three important things that a thesis **MUST** have and there is an easy way to remember them:

TOPIC: What is the focus of the paper?

STANCE: What is being said about that topic, is it an argument or an observation?

BECAUSE/WHY: What are the facts that will be used to support that stance?

This thesis should guide the reader as to what the paper will be covering, and can also help double check that the outline covers everything it needs to. Here are some examples of thesis statements:

Reading *develops a child's mind* by fostering comprehension skills, increasing vocabulary, and exposing them to new worlds they might not otherwise encounter.

The internet *serves as a means* of expediently connecting people across the globe, fostering new friendships and an exchange of ideas that wouldn't have occurred prior to its inception.

Topic Sentences: These are the sentences that start each paragraph and act as a guide for what that paragraph will be covering. It's a good idea to think of them as mini-thesis statements; topic sentences should tell the reader clearly what to expect. These are also handy to make sure the paper is staying on topic. If you are starting to write about something else, you should be starting a new paragraph!

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