

Outlining

The following shows how outline format is set up and used:

- I. Main point follows a Roman numeral.
 - A. Minor points follow behind capital letters.
 - B. Each minor point must refer to or be a part of the major point above
 1. If there are subpoints below the minor point, use Arabic numerals.
 2. Notice that each point is indented from according to its importance.
 3. Each subpoint must be related to or a part of the minor point it follows.
 - a. If there are points below subpoints, they use lower case letters.
 - b. They are indented below the subpoint and are related to the subpoint or part of the subpoint above it.
 - 1.) Sometimes, there are even smaller subdivisions,
 - 2.) And these use Arabic numerals with a parenthesis.
 - C. The next minor point below the major point
- II. Next Major point follows Roman numeral II.
 - A. Minor point
 - B. Minor point
 1. Subpoint
 2. Subpoint

Then this same pattern and format continues until the outline is complete. Often when preparing to write an essay, the major points match the key ideas that would be in the topic sentences for the paragraphs of the essay. The first Roman numeral would be for the introductory paragraph, the next for the first body paragraph, the third for the second body paragraph, with the total number of Roman Numerals equal to the number of paragraphs in the essay.

Outlines can also be used as a guide for oral presentations or for other kinds of reporting, and sometimes outlines serve as the final communication. Usually outlines used as preparation for an essay contain phrases for each point, since the outline is only a guide and the entire idea will be written as sentences when the essay is drafted.