

Outlines

Explanation

Writing an outline is the first step in the writing process. Essays written without an outline tend to be unfocused and poorly organized. By writing an outline, a writer begins not only to format and arrange his or her points, but also to form his or her argument into a strong thesis. Through organizing the points he or she wishes to make, a writer begins to see clearly the main argument that his or her points cumulatively prove. This also allows the writer to organize his or her essay on a paragraph or point-based level. Ultimately, an outline allows a writer to observe which of his or her points does not fit into his or her essay, allowing for both a better formatted and a better argued paper.

Model

Thesis: Dogs are ~~always~~ better pets than cats *because they are easier to care for, they have better temperaments, they are more interactive, and they promote better lifestyles.*

1. Dogs are easier to care for than cats.
 - a. No litter box to clean.
 - b. Less damage to the furniture.
 - c. Some breeds do not require as much grooming.
2. Dogs have better temperaments than cats.
 - a. Dogs are more loveable.
 - b. Dogs are more loyal.
 - c. Dogs are easier to train.
3. Dogs are ~~funner~~ pets *more interactive than cats.*
 - a. Dogs go on walks.
 - b. Dogs play fetch and other games.
 - c. ~~Cats aren't fun~~ *Cats are more solitary.*
4. Dogs promote better lifestyles.
 - a. Walks
 - b. Hikes
5. ~~Dogs are friendlier~~
 - a. ~~Cats are aloof.~~

It is always important to edit your outline as your argument becomes clearer. Italics indicate text that was added as a result of such editing.

Always be sure that all of your points are strong and sound. Delete or rephrase those that are lacking.

Stay away from points that are only opinion and cannot be supported by fact.

Exercise

Complete the following outline. Be sure not only to include some of your own arguments and ideas, but also edit the points already present in the outline.

Thesis: College is harder than high school.

1. There is less support in college.
 - a. No one monitors class attendance.
 - b. There are no consequences for missing class.
 - c. Students may be removed from family and friends.
2. There is more outside pressures for college students.
 - a. More college students have jobs.
 - b. There are more temptations because college students have more friends.
 - c.
3.
 - a.
 - b.