



APSU Writing Center

Outlining

Outlining

- **Uses for an Outline**
 - Organizes ideas in a clear, chronological pattern
 - Determines the length of the paper and each main point
 - Helps with brainstorming, researching, and writing
 - Allows the writer to stay on topic
- **How to Set Up an Outline**

Title

1. Introduction
 - a. Introduce the topic
 - b. Premise/Thesis
2. Body
 - a. Point 1
 - i. Supporting Information
 - ii. Supporting Information
 - b. Point 2
 - i. Supporting Information
 - ii. Supporting Information
3. Conclusion/Summary
 - a. Summary of main points
 - b. Conclusion reached (Restatement or reiteration of thesis)
4. Citations

- **Note:** The outline is not restricted to two main points. An outline and the essay can have numerous main points and paragraphs. However, the outline is generally double-spaced in Times New Roman, size 12.
- **Example of an Outline**

Source for the outline: Austin Community College

Title: *Common Sense* and Its Impact on American Political Thought

Thesis: Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* articulated the anti-British sentiments of the Colonies in a way so unprecedented that it permanently changed the face of political thought in America.



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1. Introduction

- a. Thesis: Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* articulated the anti-British sentiments of the Colonies in a way so unprecedented that it permanently changed the face of political thought in America.

2. What did *Common Sense* say that was so different?

- a. It denounced both the monarchy and the English Constitution, which had previously been looked upon as a brilliant political document. Americans realized the inherent fallacies of hereditary government (specifically monarchy) as well as the English Constitution which protected the monarchy.
- b. It called for Americans to disconnect themselves from the flawed British system and create a new one for themselves. *Common Sense* questioned the long-standing belief that residents of the colonies were inseparably connected to England. It gave them a new identity – Americans rather than Britains.
- c. It also outlined the benefits of a republican government, which would go on to influence the ideas of the Founding Fathers as they created a new government for their new country.

3. What was *Common Sense*'s immediate effect on the Colonies?

- a. The debate in the American Colonies shifted from that of reconciliation with England to that of independence.
- b. It was read by an unprecedented number of colonists and united a great majority of them behind independence.
- c. It inspired American intellectuals with its call for independence, leading to the composition of the Declaration of Independence a mere six months later.

4. What were *Common Sense*'s long term effects?

- a. It changed the connotation of the word "revolution" to something that looked to the future. "Revolution" became a word of innovation rather than renovation.
- b. It permanently cemented the idea of a republican, non-hereditary government into the heads of Americans. *Common Sense*'s design for a republican government, and its basic principles were carried on to the Constitution.

5. Conclusion

- a. *Common Sense*'s eloquent, articulate, and unprecedented arguments led to a permanent change in American political thought.