

**This handout should be used in conjunction with the “Outline” audio podcast.**

If you have not listened to and completed the “Topic and Main Idea” podcast and “Supporting Details” podcast, you may want to start with those.

## Outline

An outline is a visual representation of topic, main idea, major details and minor details of a passage which shows the level of importance.

### Outline Tips:

1. Outlines provide a visual of the most important information in the passage; topic, main idea, major details and minor details.
2. Oftentimes, minor details should not be included in an outline because the minor details are not essential to the passage. Minor details are there to help the reader understand the major details of the passage.
3. Outlines do not have to follow a strict bullet or numbering system. This means, you shouldn't worry about what Roman numeral comes next. Use what works for you. I will be using indentation and bullets because it is natural for us to notice information in the style we are used to reading, left to right, and bullets help to identify a new idea.
4. Use what you know about main ideas, major details and minor details to work for you.
5. Outlines should not be sentences (except for the complete main idea) because phrases allow us to recall the information better and provides an improved visual.

## Examples

There are several steps to follow when writing a good outline. First, identify the topic. Ask what is the key idea of this passage? Second, decide what the author's point is about the topic. This is the main idea. Next are major details. What points support the main idea? Make sure the major details completely support the main idea. Also make sure the major details are completely covered by the main idea. If the outline needs to be more detailed, include the minor details. Minor details support the major details. Once all of these points are identified, the final step is to record these ideas in phrases which shows the level of importance. This can be done using indentations, bullets or even numbering. Complete an outline using these simple steps.

### Example Outline:

#### Creating an outline

There are several steps to follow when writing a good outline.

- Topic
  - Key idea
- Main idea
  - Author's point about the topic
- Major details
  - Points which support the main idea

- Minor details
  - Points which support the major details
- Record ideas in phrases by level of importance
  - Use indentations, bullets, numbers, etc...

Notice you can identify the information needed for the outline by finding the main idea, writing it as a question and finding the answers to the question, which are the major details.

Topic: Creating an outline

Main Idea: There are several steps to follow when writing a good outline.

Question based on main idea: What are the steps to follow when writing a good outline?

Major details:

- Topic
  - Minor - key idea
- Main idea
  - Minor – author’s point about the topic
- Major details
  - Minor – points which support the main idea
- Minor details
  - Minor – points which support the major details
- Record ideas in phrases by level of importance
  - Minor – use indentations, bullets, numbers, etc...

\*Remember to write your outline as in the 1<sup>st</sup> example because the extra words in the 2nd example makes it less visually significant. The 2<sup>nd</sup> example is only to show from where each point came.

## Practice

These practice examples are discussed in order on the podcast. Try them on your own before listening to the explanation.

1. These days it seems everyone is going green. Recycling stations, reusable tote bags and solar panels are common sights in our everyday lives. One of the ultimate ways of helping the environment is the hybrid car. Hybrids are able to do this by working smarter. These cars use electric motors in conjunction with combustion engines. This reduces the amount of gas and oil used, and also lowers emissions. Hybrids also “think smarter” by deciding which engine should be used and when to store energy in the car’s battery. Finally, the motor acts as a generator and produces its own electricity. Going green couldn’t be easier.

Your outline:

2. Most people are capable of losing weight by increasing their level of activity and improving their diets. A healthy diet does not need to be the regimented diets of our parents' generation. It can be watching the number of calories consumed and keeping it at the recommended number according to age and weight. A healthy diet also means increasing whole grains and calcium. Of course eating healthy also means reducing or eliminating poor food choices. These include fatty foods, sugars and carbohydrates.

Your outline:

3. Joe and Jill Biden have a love affair to be celebrated. They have been married for 35 years and know the secrets to a happy marriage. Couples need to remember to keep honesty in the forefront of their relationship. If a partner has a secret, a hole can be made in the relationship. Couples also need to remember to make their relationship a top priority. When jobs, friends and hobbies get in the way, the significant other will feel slighted, and this can cause a rift. Finally, keeping a good sense of humor can keep a couple together. Those who laugh together stay together.

Your outline:

### Answers:

Remember, your answers do not need to be word-for-word the answers below. Specifically, the wording of your main idea may be different, but it should always include the topic and be completely supported by the major details.

#### 1. Hybrids help environment

Hybrid cars help the environment by working smarter.

- Electric motor and combustion engine
  - Less gas, oil and emissions
- Decides which engine to use
- Stores energy in battery
- Motor produces own electricity
  - Acts as generator

## 2. Healthy diet and weight loss

Most people can lose weight by eating a healthy diet.

- Watch calories
  - Based on age and weight
- Increase healthy foods
  - Whole grains and calcium
- Limit unhealthy foods
  - Fats, sugars and carbohydrates

## 3. Secrets to a happy marriage

There are several secrets to a happy marriage.

- Honesty
  - Secrets cause holes
- Relationship top priority
  - Rifts caused by job, friends, hobbies
- Good sense of humor
  - Laugh together, stay together