



George School

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## HOW TO WRITE AN OUTLINE Prepared by Ben Croucher

An outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, hierarchical manner. Most students find that writing an outline *before* beginning the paper is most helpful in organizing one's thoughts. If your outline is good, your paper should be easy to write. The basic format for an outline uses an alternating series of numbers and letters, indented accordingly, to indicate levels of importance. Here is an example of an outline on a paper about the development of Japanese theater

### OUTLINE

- I. Thesis: Japanese theater arose from a popular to elite art form and then returned to a popular art form.
  
- II. Early theatrical forms
  - A. Bugaku
  - B. Sarugaku
  - C. Primitive Noh
  - D. Authors and Audience
  
- III. Noh theater
  - A. Authors
  - B. Props
    - 1. Masks
      - a. women
      - b. demons
      - c. old men
    - 2. Structure of Stage
  - C. Themes
    - 1. Buddhist influence
    - 2. The supernatural
  - D. Kyogen interludes
  - E. Audience

### NOTES

The thesis is stated in the first section, which is the **introduction**.

The **body** follows the introduction, and breaks down the points the author wishes to make.

Note that some sections have subdivisions, others do not, depending on the demands of the paper.

In this outline, II, III, & IV all have similar structure, but this will not necessarily be true for all papers. Some may only have three major sections, others more than the five given here.

- IV. Kabuki
  - A. Authors
  - B. Props
    - 1. make-up
    - 2. special effects
  - C. Themes
    - 1. Love stories
    - 2. Revenge
  - D. Audience
- V. Bunraku (puppet) theater
  - A. Authors
  - B. Props
  - C. Themes
    - 1. Love stories
    - 2. Historical romances
  - D. Audience
- VI. Conclusion

Your **conclusion** should *restate* your thesis, and *never* introduce new material.