

# HOW TO... Outline an Academic Paper

Use Roman numerals to identify organizational divisions.

I.

## Introduction:

- A. Provide a context for why you are writing on your topic.
- B. Acknowledge your purpose. (thesis)
- C. Indicate how you will accomplish it. (thesis)

Use bold font to visually emphasize the topic sentence/major point.

II.

## **Major Point #1: Present a specific point of analysis, never a summary or a narration.**

- A. Give an example or identify evidence/support.
- B. Provide another example or supporting link to your thesis.
- C. Consider a counter argument to one of your examples.

Use capital letters (A, B, C...) to itemize how the major point will be developed. Each letter can (but doesn't have to) represent a different paragraph.

III.

## **Major Point #2: Specific statement to maintain progression of your analysis.**

- A. Another insight to build on the thesis.
- B. Specific evidence or source to defend your analysis.

Longer papers will have more points/counter arguments to itemize. \*Longer papers have more paragraphs, not longer paragraphs\*

IV. +

For however many points you will write in the paper, follow the established model above to outline them.

## Conclusion:

- A. Reflect on the paper's thesis by summarizing your major points. Do not literally re-state the points or the thesis word-for-word.
- B. Derive a take-away message from the collection of examples and evidence.
- C. Consider directions/options for future research.

## EXAMPLE\*

### Topic: Psychology and Eating Meat

#### Introduction

A. The eating of animals is a subject that intersects many fields of human interest. Focusing on the psychology of eating animals leads us to examine the “meat paradox”—which is a term used to describe the fact that most people eat animals, but most people also care about animals.

B. The resolution of this moral “meat paradox” dilemma is best examined through the psychological interplay of human emotions, cognitions, and personality.

C. By studying the eaters, the eaten, and the eating, we can investigate psychology’s role in everyday morality.

#### The Eaters

A. Vegetarians avoid the meat paradox by not eating animals.

B. Avoidance is a behavioural choice.

C. Taste, texture, and aversions are emotional bases for choice.

D. Personality can also affect choices—seen in authoritarian perspectives and gender identity. For instance, “masculinity” is associated with predatory behaviour, and eating meat is an authoritarian act.

#### The Eaten

A. The connection between moral concerns and nonhuman animals is related to perceptions of suffering, pain, and the animal’s ability to reason.

B. Animal edibility is based on their perceived mind.

C. Emotional reactions to animal suffering factors into the meat paradox.

#### The Eating

A. Emotional regulation may occur during the eating of meat in order to lessen the negative feelings of eating an animal.

B. Meat eaters may attribute the animals they are consuming to have “lesser minds.”

#### Conclusion

A. The meat paradox may be resolved by varying levels of consideration to animal welfare, cultural values (especially ones that define masculinity), and a social hierarchy of care/moral value for animals.

B. Meat eating can also be studied more extensively as human morality.

C. Meat eating remains controversial and will likely continue to be so, especially given widespread food insecurity, environmental pressures, and economics, so it’s important for researchers to continue to examine the psychology of meat eating.

\*Outline based on: Loughnan, Steve et al. “The Psychology of Eating Animals.” *Becoming an Active Reader: A Complete Resource for Reading and Writing*, edited by Eric Henderson, Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 300-306.