

**Research Paper Initial Outline**

**CENTRAL QUESTION:** What is your current central question? (Revise it if your research has taken you in a new/different direction than initially thought.)

**Bullet the information you plan to include in your intro paragraph as background:** *(Consider what information is important for the reader to know in terms of general context vs. the information you will go into in greater depth later in the body of the paper.)*

**THESIS STATEMENT:** What is your tentative thesis statement (or answer to the above question)?

**BODY PARAGRAPHS**

**BODY PARAGRAPH PLAN/TOPICS:** (Highlight/bold whether the paragraph is background or analytical.)

#BP1: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

#BP2: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

#BP3: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

#BP4: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

#BP5: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

#BP6: (BACKGROUND / ANALYTICAL)?

Topic:

How will this info further help the reader understand your argument?

Tentative topic sentence:

**The purpose of a research paper is not to summarize or retell a story. This should NOT be a book report. Instead, your paper should make a specific argument. With this in mind, research papers are unlike analytical essays in that every paragraph does not *have to* connect directly to the thesis statement. You may include a paragraph here or there that does not *directly* support the thesis statement. You may do this only if you are including the paragraph of information with the intention of using it to set up another argument which will support the thesis.**

You will have 2 different kinds of paragraphs in your paper - background paragraphs and argumentative paragraphs.

**Background paragraphs:** Depending on your topic/outline, you may need 1 or 2 background paragraphs to set up your argument. However, they should be used sparingly. This is an ARGUMENTATIVE essay, therefore there should not be more background than evidence & argument.

- When deciding what to include in a background paragraph, consider whether the reader needs this information in order to better understand the argument that is to come later. How do you think it will further help them understand your argument?
- Background paragraph(s) can and should be placed wherever it makes the most sense in terms of flow of information. Sometimes that means they will be your first body paragraph, in other cases you might have one first, then 1-2 analytical paragraphs, and then another background paragraph before closing on 2 more analytical paragraphs. If you're not sure how to set this up, ASK FOR HELP!

**Analytical paragraphs:** You should have at least 3-4 argumentative paragraphs in the body of your paper. This is where you will do the bulk of your work and where your thesis will be proven. Each of these paragraphs should start with an argumentative topic sentence that clearly and directly addresses the thesis.

- Each analytical paragraph should contain specific examples/evidence to support the specific point being addressed in the paragraph.
  - Examples should include quotations, facts, statistics, etc. (with citations)
  - This is where you will usually include quotations from texts and citations from readings and notes that you have. You should have *at least one* quote per paragraph.
  - Supporting facts or quotes should be smoothly integrated into the paragraph. Do not assume that the evidence speaks for itself! Introduce your quotes and then either summarize how they relate to your thesis or analyze what the quote tells you about your topic.
- The last 1-2 sentences of each analytical paragraph should connect the information discussed in the paragraph to the thesis statement and not only bring the paragraph to a conclusion, but it should also serve as a transition into the next body paragraph (i.e. find a connection or relationship between the two paragraphs.)