Kids InfoBits Toolbox – Creating an Outline

The Kids InfoBits Toolbox tip sheets are designed to help young researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain what an outline is and why it’s useful when writing a report.


Some people like to write their reports using the web they created. Others prefer to use an outline form. You may use whichever style you prefer. There are samples for creating an outline using a web that was created and making an outline without using a web.

If you have already created a web to organize your ideas for your topic, creating an outline will be very easy. Look at your web. Each circle represents one grouping for your outline. To make an outline, list each word in the circle in outline form. Here is a sample from a web about cats.

**Revered by the ancient Egyptians**

**Popular pets**

**Many breeds and colors**

**Mammals**

**Cats**

An outline form of the same information would be written like this.

I. Popular pets
II. Many breeds and colors
III. Mammals
IV. Revered by ancient Egyptians

There is one Roman numeral written for each of the topics in the circles. To help you decide which order to write them in, think about which topic you would like to write about first.

You can add details to the outline in the same way you added details to your web. Look at our complex web about cats on the next page.
Let's write it in an outline form using the same headings. We will add the details as subheadings.

I. Popular pets
   A. owned by many people
   B. most do not work for owners
   C. more cats than dogs as pets

II. Many breeds and colors
    A. more than 50 breeds of cats
    B. most are not purebred
    C. each breed has distinct colors

III. Mammals
    A. give birth to live young
    B. have fur
    C. are warm-blooded

IV. Revered by ancient Egyptians
    A. Mufdet was first feline Egyptian god
    B. owners shaved eyebrows to show sorrow when cat died
    C. severe punishment for killing a cat in ancient Egypt
If you have not already created a web, you can still make an outline to help you organize your writing. There are just a couple of steps to follow.

1. Write your main ideas about the topic. Label each of these with a Roman numeral. These are called headings.
2. List details about each of your headings. The details are called subheadings. They are labeled with letters of the alphabet.

Your outline will look like this; look at the example on the previous page to see how our cats report outline would look.

I. Heading
   A. Detail
   B. Detail
   C. detail

II. Heading
   A. Detail
   B. Detail
   C. Detail

III. Heading
    A. Detail
    B. Detail
    C. Detail

IV. Heading
    A. Detail
    B. Detail
    C. Detail

The number of headings you use will depend on the number of ideas you choose to write about. Most reports should will have at least 5 paragraphs. The first paragraph will be your introduction. The last paragraph will be your conclusion. The middle paragraphs will contain the details about your topic. Check with your teacher to see if he or she wants you to write a certain number of paragraphs.

You can download worksheets to help you create an outline here:

Creating an outline without a web: [http://assets.cengage.com/training/CreatOutlineNoWeb.pdf](http://assets.cengage.com/training/CreatOutlineNoWeb.pdf)