

Organizing Your Presentation: Basic Outline Format

Good organization is essential anytime you need to communicate your ideas to another person or group of people. It helps them follow you, understand how ideas are related, and retain the information.

Regardless of your audience, purpose, or content, the following outline format will help you determine the best placement of the information you need to convey. Remember to start with the body – decide on your main points first – and then proceed to develop an introduction and conclusion. All decisions about content and organization should be made with your overarching thesis in mind. The number of main points and subpoints depend on your particular topic and the content you need to convey.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Attention-getter (How will you make the audience interested and want to listen?)
 - B. Establish credibility (Why are you qualified to speak on this topic?)
 - C. Thesis (What is the main focus of your presentation?)
 - D. Preview (What will your main points be in this presentation?)

- II. Body
 - A. First main point
 1. Supporting materials/ideas
 2. Supporting materials/ideas

 - B. Second main point
 1. Supporting materials/ideas
 2. Supporting materials/ideas

 - C. Third main point
 1. Supporting materials/ideas
 2. Supporting materials/ideas

 - D. etc...

- III. Conclusion
 - A. Signal to the audience that you've finished with your main points
 - B. Review your main points
 - C. Provide closure

The reading that follows describes several types of organizational patterns that you can use to decide what your main points will be. It is an excerpt from: O'Hair, D., Stewart, R., & Rubenstein, H. (2007). *A speaker's guidebook: Text and reference* (3rd ed.). Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's.

