

TOK Essay Preparation

Thesis + Sentence Outline Assignment

OVERALL LENGTH: Approximately 1 typed page for both thesis and outline, combined (and definitely no longer than 2).

SPACING: Double-spacing. Use 12-point font.

THESIS: Your thesis should be a general response (several sentences) to the prescribed title you have selected. This is not necessarily what you imagine your complete introduction will be, nor should it include any specifics.

SENTENCE OUTLINE: Your outline reveals the structure of your argument, displaying its main claims, counterclaims, supporting points, and real-life examples. The outline must consist of complete sentences (not phrases) that clearly communicate the structure of your argument. Follow the guidelines below and refer to the model on the back of this sheet.

OUTLINE GUIDELINES

1. The Roman numerals, Arabic numerals, etc. of standard outline format (or indented bullets) should be used to show development of ideas.
2. Please put in parentheses the categorizing terms: "MAIN CLAIM," "COUNTERCLAIM," "SUPPORTING POINT," "REAL LIFE EXAMPLE," etc., so that I know what you consider that aspect of your argument to be.
3. Although the main counterclaim comes first in the model on the back of this sheet, that's just a possibility. A counterclaim that is first allows you to get a potential weakness in your argument or alternative point out of the way and finish with your stronger points, but counterclaims can be effectively integrated in various places, including last of all.
4. At this point it is not necessary (and may not be possible) to think in terms of which outline entry level (i.e., "I", "a" or "i") is a paragraph. That will come when you get ready to start drafting.
5. You need not include any entries that would be your conclusion. I really am just interested at this point in the basic content and structure of your argument as a whole.

WHAT ELSE?

- Detail/Evidence: Do not go into any detail at all regarding evidence. A single complete sentence with the heading "Real Life Example" is sufficient for me to see that you have thought of how you will support your key ideas.
- Detail/Explanations: Also, do not elaborate on key points – again, a single complete sentence for "Main Claim," "Supporting Point," and so on will allow me to see the conceptual structure of your response to the essay title.
- Length: As mentioned above, it is important that this be approximately one page. I need to be able to get through a large number of outlines in a limited amount of time. Please be clear and succinct.
- Format: If you fail to follow the format described here, I may stop reading and give you zero points for this assignment. ***Deal-breaking aspects of format:*** Failing to label your entries, using phrases or single word entries rather than complete sentences. Every outline entry must be a claim about something – this is the only way I can tell what you are planning on asserting. Also, please save the file as **LASTNAME-Period__-Outline**.
- DEADLINE: **Digital submission VIA ATTACHMENT by 12:00am on Tuesday, May 21, 2019** --- ABSOLUTELY NO LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Subject title should be the same as the file name: **LASTNAME-Period__-Outline** (Collazo-Period1-Outline).

PRESCRIBED TITLE: For some people, science is the supreme form of knowledge. Is this view reasonable or does it involve a misunderstanding of science or of knowledge?

Preliminary thesis:

For many people in the modern industrialized world, science reigns supreme in determining what we know. The power of science to improve our material lives and understand the world around us is indisputable. But to assert that science is the supreme form of knowledge is to misunderstand both science and knowledge. Science's many methods are effective but limited, and scientific claims are at best probable. Science can often tell us "what" or "how" as it relates to what can be studied empirically, but it cannot tell us "why" or point us towards ultimate meanings.

Sentence Outline:

- I. **(COUNTERCLAIM)** From the perspective of the early 21st century, the history of science seems like a triumphant march of progress in which human knowledge is increasing exponentially.
 - a. **(SUPPORTING POINT)** More so than any other area of knowledge, science "delivers the goods" (Sagan) in showing us how the natural world truly works.
 - i. **(REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE)** Advances in physics and cosmology from Ptolemy to Copernicus to Newton to Einstein reveal a universe more complicated than could have been imagined.
 - b. **(SUPPORTING POINT)** The power of the scientific method—with its emphasis on experiment, falsifiability, and verification—allows for physical improvement of the human condition.
 - i. **(REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE)** Research into cancer over the past several decades has resulted in unprecedented survival rates such that in many cases a diagnosis today that was once a death sentence can lead to a total cure.
- II. **(MAIN CLAIM)** While science's tools are quite effective, they have limited scope, and the conclusions they produce are probable, not 100% certain.
 - a. **(SUPPORTING POINT)** Because of "the problem of induction," scientific claims are probable, not absolutely certain (McComas).
 - i. **(REAL LIFE EXAMPLE)** Although evolution is an extremely well-supported theory with extensive evidence to back it, it is possible that new evidence will surface that will both improve our understanding of the diversity of species and require us to adjust aspects of the theory.
 - b. **(SUPPORTING POINT)** Knowledge about the answers to many of life's most important questions cannot be addressed through scientific reason and empiricism.
 - i. **(REAL LIFE EXAMPLE)** While psychologists, behavioral economists, and other researchers in the human sciences can shed some light on how we make moral judgments (Pinker), determining whether something is ethical or not is difficult if not impossible from a scientific perspective.