CREATING A FORMAL OUTLINE

Thesis:
I. INTRODUCTION
   A. Definition, Description, and History (as appropriate)
   B. Statement of Purpose
   C. Information Sources (including research methods and materials)
   D. Working Definitions (if appropriate)
   E. Limitations of the Report (if appropriate)
   F. Scope of Coverage (sequence of major topics in the body)

II. BODY
   A. First Major Topic
      1. First subtopic of A
      2. Second subtopic of A
         a. First subtopic of 2
         b. Second subtopic of 2
            (1) (And so on—subdivision carried as far as necessary)
   B. Second Major Topic
      1. (and so on)

III. CONCLUSION (where everything is tied together)

A good outline also conforms to the following guidelines:
   ● It obeys the “rule of two”: each “main topic” should contain at least two subtopics; subtopics, if followed by sub-subtopics, should again contain at least two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portion of a “poor” outline</th>
<th>Portion of a “good” outline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. Body</td>
<td>II. Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. First Major Topic</td>
<td>D. First Major Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Second Major Topic</td>
<td>1. Subtopic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Subtopic</td>
<td>2. Subtopic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Sub-subtopic</td>
<td>a. Sub-subtopic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Third Major Topic</td>
<td>b. Sub-subtopic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Sub-subtopic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   ● It avoids overlap: each topic addresses a distinct idea.
   ● It maintains coherence: subtopics and sub-subtopics relate directly to their major topics, rather than leading reader and writer off on tempting tangents.
   ● It maintains internal parallelism: all items at any given level are grammatically-similar
By the time you have created an effective formal outline, you will be ready to write a first draft of your paper. Indeed, many writers work from rough, skeletal outlines to create first, exploratory drafts, and only then, after revising those drafts, do they commit themselves to a formal outline.

Note, too, that some writers do not find the need to use a formal outline; by the time they have created a first draft from their initial, organizational “skeleton,” they are ready to stick with that draft, revising and fine-tuning it, until they feel they have accomplished their purpose.

Thesis: Much of the debate on Ebonics displays misinformation about what exactly a dialect is. Misinformation propagated by North American Newspapers

---

A. Definitions
1. What is a dialect?
   a. distinguishing features of dialect
   b. a dialect is not just slang expressions such as “getting jiggy with it”
2. Ebonics
   a. working definition
   b. What did Labov write about it?
   c. later work on Black English

B. Definitions
1. What is a dialect?
   a. distinguishing features of dialect
   b. common misconceptions concerning dialect
2. What is Ebonics?
   a. a working definition
   b. Labov’s analysis of Black English
   c. later scholarly analyses of Black English

● It provides clear and informative headings

---

Not informative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. The Portrayal of Ebonics in North American Newspapers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. the Globe and Mail portrayals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. the New York Times’ portrayals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the Washington Post’s portrayals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. The Portrayal of Ebonics in North American Newspapers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. the Globe &amp; Mail’s association of Ebonics, African-Americans, and inner-city crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the Washington Post’s portrayal of Ebonics as defective and lazy use of English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

American newspapers, alone, includes unjustified negative value judgments and the belief that Ebonics is simply slang.

I. Introduction

A. A brief overview of the Ebonics debate; a brief definition of Ebonics
B. Purpose: to show the extent to which public portrayals of Ebonics is linguistically misguided
D. Scope: 

I. Body

1. Definitions
   1. What is a dialect?
      1. distinguishing features of dialect
      2. common misconceptions concerning dialect
   2. What is Ebonics?
      1. a working definition
      2. Labov’s analysis of Black English
      3. later scholarly analyses of Black English

A. The Portrayal of Ebonics in North American Newspapers
   1. the Globe and Mail’s association of Ebonics, African-Americans, and inner-city crime
   3. the Washington Post’s portrayal of Ebonics as defective and lazy use of English

III. Conclusion

C. Linguists and the general public have radically different views on dialect in general and Ebonics in particular.
D. Linguists should be involved in education of the general public on this critical issue.
Canada, A1C 57S.