

# The outline in your research proposal

Draft 01152017

Your paper will review and discuss the research and its conclusions in, for example X articles (3 or 4?), or some combinations of books and articles

In your proposal, I ask for an outline.

**The outline should relate to your specific articles. The outline tells me how you will organize your discussion of those X articles (or whatever) and how they relate to what is in the book.**

An outline that simply has terms like “literature review” or “finding” provides little in the way of information.<sup>1</sup>

You outline should be giving me a guide to how you will present what is in the articles you have found.

Where for example, does each of your articles fit in terms of your outlines?

There are **good and bad ways to organize** your paper.

1. Imagine that you simply write a paper that lists the X abstracts (each expanded a bit) in the chronological order they were published. That would be a bad organization and generate a bad paper.

Maybe you could fix it by adding a third section which how and why the book should be modified based on the research you have found.

2. Alternatively you could organize by different aspects of your topic and relate what each article has to say about that topic and how it relates to the book, and the other subtopics. (What if any are your subtopics?)

For example, imagine your topic is how your behavior is influenced by your memories. A subtopic might be the neurology of how memories influence choices, another might be psychological studies of how memories affect choice. So, one might organize by subtopics.

3. One possible organization approach (depending on how much what you find suggests changes in the book) is to think of your paper as a replacement section for the book or an appendix to a particular section of the book. In which case, how would your outline that replacement or extension.

---

<sup>1</sup> Worse would be an outline with only “Section 1”, “Section 2”, etc. Such could be an outline for any topic, so tells the reader nothing.

4. If your topic is a research proposal (a proposal to do a study) it would be organized/outlined as one would organize a proposal to a research funding agency.

Some of the better past projects were such that I could easily blend what was reported into the book with additions and deletions. Easy in part because there pointed out specific contrasts with the book and the research surveyed in the book.

Sometimes the issue with organization is not the overall structure but the order in which the sections are presented. Often, in a second draft the author chooses to change the order.

Make sure your proposal and outline includes how the research you are reporting relates to the book.

I googled how to outline a literature review, and a bunch came up. One that I quickly looked at was a page from U. of Southern California, a guide to outlining the literature review in a PhD dissertation. \

<http://dissertationedd.usc.edu/outline-for-literature-review.html>

<http://www.wilderdom.com/OEcourses/PROFLIT/Class3LiteratureReview.htm>

Take a look at a few you're the results of this google search. Note that these suggestions might not fit your case.