

# Creating an Informal Outline for Your Research Paper

Below is an example of an informal outline for a student research paper. Review the outline and use it as a guide for developing an informal outline for your own paper:

## Children Raised by Same-Sex Parents: Love Is Enough

### 1) **Introduction—Issue + Thesis:**

Issue: Same sex couples/parents with a child or children. The writer himself was raised by lesbian parents and considers himself well-adjusted and normal. But such a family is outside the accepted “norm,” and may be viewed as dysfunctional and harmful to the development of a child.

Thesis question: What is the effect, if any, on the well-being and social adjustment of a child raised by a same sex couple?

Provisional/Projected thesis: A child’s well-being and social adjustment is not significantly affected by the non-traditional family and the parent’s sexual orientation.

### 2) **Optional Background Information and Opposing Arguments:**

Background information: what defines “family” and “family values?”

Opposing views—i.e. some legitimate reasons why a child would be adversely affected (briefly summarized here): 1) The child might be influenced to become homosexual (Tuckmann & L.A. *Sentinel* series, myself? or Prof. Silva). 2) Child would be deprived of healthy gender-identification—i.e. role models for both sexes (Parks & Rodriguez). 3) Family would lack legitimacy and consequently stability (esp. Parks & L.A. *Sentinel* series). 4) Child would experience inevitable stress due to social disapproval, and as a result, become alienated, isolated, depressed (Parks & Rodriguez).

### 3) **Thesis Support/Body:**

Try to build from the least important to most important points, so as to end with your strongest point or argument:

- No evidence that parent’s sexual orientation influences child’s. Same situation as heterosexual parents with child who turns out gay. Sexual orientation not a lifestyle choice. Gay parents actually more open, understanding and accepting re sexual orientation (Tuckmann & L.A. *Sentinel* series, myself & or Prof. Silva).
- No evidence of a pattern of gender-role behavior that differs from other kids (as regards toys, types of games, TV programs, hobbies, social activities, kinds of friends, etc)... (Parks & Rodriguez)...
- Misconception that homosexual parents are less committed to each other than heterosexuals. Stats show same level of commitment and family responsibility (myself? or Prof. Silva; Parks & L.A. *Sentinel* series).
- (maybe?) In reality, no perfect “Leave It to Beaver” families truly exist....Show gamut of dysfunctions across the board (AAPA, Parks & Rodriguez)...
- No significant evidence of emotional damage or alienation from social disapproval, etc. (Parks & Rodriguez).

### **Ending:**

Quote from AAPA study or Prof. Silva interview (?)...Concede imperfect family for a child, yet perfection doesn’t exist (?)...

### **Pointers for Your Outline**

- When you start your outline, complete as much of it as you can, but you do not have to finish it all at once.

As you proceed with your research and drafting, you can come back, make changes and fill in more details.

- Don't be concerned about "flow" and transitions at this stage. Those issues will resolve themselves as you write your paper. It's always unrealistic and unproductive to think of outlining, or writing, as neat and mechanical; the drafting and planning process is messy. Think in terms of getting down the key points that the paper will cover.

### **Key Elements of an Informal Outline**

#### **Working Title:**

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#### **1) Introduction—Issue + Thesis:**

Describe/introduce the central Issue

Thesis question and/or your projected (or hypothetical) thesis

#### **2) Optional Background Information and Opposing Arguments:**

Background information and/or opposing views

#### **3) Thesis Support/Body (Build from the least important to most important points, so as to end with your strongest point or argument):**

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#### **4) Ending:**

Avoid a bland repetition of your main points. In a short paper, the ending may be an extension of the last and strongest supporting point.

A good ending also can amplify on the significance and value of the views, arguments and research presented in your paper.

Leave the reader with something to remember or think about.