

Topic and Sentence Outlines

A formal outline is a kind of graphic scheme of the logic of your paper. Two main types of outlines are used:

1) The topic outline, and 2) the sentence outline.

The advantage of the topic outline, besides its brevity, is that its parallel structure reveals the logic you will follow in your paper. The advantage of a sentence outline is that it helps you make sure you become sufficiently specific about your subject, rather than simply generalizing. Regardless of what type of outline you choose, you will need to have enough major headings to develop your topic fully within the boundaries established by your thesis statement.

Note the following examples of topic and sentence outlines using the same thesis and subject matter. *(Check with your instructor about spacing.)*

Thesis: The abuse of alcohol and drugs can affect a person economically, psychologically, and physically.

Topic Outline:

I. Economical effects (Main idea)

A. Alcohol (Sub-idea)

- 1. Cost of alcohol purchases (Detail of A)**
- 2. Cost of DUIs (Detail of A)**

B. Drugs (Sub-point)

- 1. Cost of drug purchases (Detail of B)**
- 2. Cost of drug arrest (Detail of B)**

II. Psychological effects

A. Alcohol

- 1. Mental impairment**
- 2. Mental addiction**

B. Drugs

- 1. Mental impairment**
- 2. Mental addiction**

III. Physical effects

A. Alcohol

1. Liver disease
2. Alcohol poisoning

B. Drugs

1. Brain damage
2. Drug overdose

Sentence Outline

I. Alcohol and drug abuse can affect one economically.

A. The cost of alcohol abuse is high and getting higher.

1. The costs of DUIs can be enormous.
2. Alcohol costs are always rising because of rising production costs as well as state and local taxes.

B. The cost of drug abuse can be high.

1. Even the arrest for the possession of a minute amount of drugs can result in high bail and court cost.
2. The cost of drugs fluctuates drastically according to the type of drug, its availability, and the amount.

II. Alcohol and drug abuse can have severe psychological effects.

A. Alcohol abuse can damage a person psychologically.

1. Alcohol is a depressant and can alter the personality of anyone.
2. The abuse of alcohol can lead to the psychological addiction to alcohol.

B. Drug abuse can be detrimental to one psychologically.

1. Drugs impair one's ability to function normally because of the hallucinations or numbness of "getting high."
2. Drugs can become a psychological addiction.

III. Alcohol and drug abuse can affect one physically.

A. Alcohol and drug abuse can cause physical problems.

1. The most common disease among alcoholics is cirrhosis of the liver.
2. The massive consumption of alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning and death.

B. Drug abuse has many physical implications.

1. Drug abuse has been linked to the damage of brain tissue.
2. The unpredictability of drugs can lead to an overdose and death.

Follow These Rules in Outlining:

- 1. Do not mix topic and sentence outline methods.**
- 2. Indent properly.**
- 3. In a sentence outline, begin each point with a capital letter and place a period after each division number or letter and at the end of the sentence.**
- 4. In a topic outline, begin each point with a capital letter and place a period after each division number or letter. Do not place periods after ideas.**
- 5. Strive for parallel wording among outline topics and sub-topics.**