

# Formal Preparation Outline

## Topic Outline

The topic outline is the most frequently used kind of outline. It is an informal tool for organizing longer messages. It consists of brief phrases or single words (not sentences) that are numbered, lettered or bulleted to show the order and relative importance of ideas.

Topic outlines should be treated as part of the message development process. A topic outline can help you arrive at a comprehensive plan for arranging your ideas and a myriad of subordinate facts, figures, examples and other support materials.

Thesis statement: Despite problems with living conditions and finances, college men and women can find satisfactory careers in the army.

- I. Living Conditions
  - A. Disadvantages
    - 1. Discipline often annoying
    - 2. Frequent moves hard on family
    - 3. Social life restricted to a small circle
  - B. Advantages
    - 1. Opportunity to find the job one is suited for
    - 2. Annual leaves with pay
    - 3. Chance to travel, to see new places, and to meet new people
- II Financial considerations
  - A. Disadvantages
    - 1. Low pay
    - 2. Frequent entertaining is expensive
  - B. Advantages
    - 1. Security
      - a. Slow but steady promotion, including commissions for men and women graduates
      - b. Permanent employment
      - c. Good retirement benefits
    - 2. Preparation for success in civilian careers after retirement

## Sentence Outline

A sentence outline is developed in the same way as a topic outline, but the ideas are

more fully stated. Each heading is expressed as a complete sentence, usually consisting of just one main clause.

A full-sentence outline allows you to see exactly where you are headed from the beginning of the message to the end. As an ordered structure of assertions that work together to support the thesis, this kind of outline plainly defines your argumentative strategy.

Each heading is a complete, single sentence (not two or three). Each sentence is in the form of a statement (not a question). And all sentences are in the same tense.

Here is a formal sentence outline. It is not formatted for informative or persuasive speech. It contains only the claims; supporting evidence would be inserted as indicated, with each piece of evidence supporting a corresponding claim.

Thesis: Though many students from middle-income families must struggle to meet college costs, low-income students suffer even more because of the ways in which colleges and federal agencies distribute aid, advertise it, analyze students' needs, and "package" the aid provided.

- I. College costs often exceed what middle-income families can comfortably afford.
  - A. EVIDENCE
  - B. EVIDENCE
- II. But low-income students face greater obstacles to higher education than middle-income students do.
  - A. Federal programs now work to the disadvantage of low-income students.
    - 1. With funding for grants "disproportionately lower" than funding for loans, fear of heavy debt makes low-income students unwilling to borrow.
      - a. EVIDENCE
      - b. EVIDENCE
    - 2. The half-cost rule hurts low-income students more than it helps middle-income students.
      - a. EVIDENCE
      - b. EVIDENCE
    - 3. Besides cutbacks in federal aid to education, cutbacks and restrictions in other federal programs also penalize low-income students.
      - a. EVIDENCE
      - b. EVIDENCE

- B. Colleges are generally neglecting low-income students.
  - 1. Better-off students are squeezing out low-income students even at public and community colleges.
    - a. EVIDENCE
    - b. EVIDENCE
  - 2. Competing for students from middle-income families, some colleges are granting aid to students who don't truly need it.
    - a. EVIDENCE
    - b. EVIDENCE
  - 3. The gap between the cost of college and the value of aid--including aid from the college itself-- forces low-income students into overdemanding combinations of work and study.
    - a. EVIDENCE
    - b. EVIDENCE

III. Without spending substantially more, colleges and federal agencies can and should give low-income students a better chance.

- A. The federal government should eliminate the half-cost rule in the distribution of Pell Grants.
  - 1. EVIDENCE
  - 2. EVIDENCE
- B. The Department of Education should advertise its aid programs more effectively.
  - 1. EVIDENCE
  - 2. EVIDENCE
- C. Colleges and federal agencies alike should analyze every student's needs more rigorously.
  - 1. EVIDENCE
  - 2. EVIDENCE
- D. They should also increase the value of grants in packages of aid designed for low-income students.
  - 1. EVIDENCE
  - 2. EVIDENCE

IV. All of these steps can help to insure that truly needy students get the educational opportunities they deserve.