

Outline

Before you start writing the first draft of your essay or research project, it is always useful to make an outline of your ideas. If you have already decided on your focus or topic, and you have a rough list of sources for support, then you are ready to draft an outline.

Keep in mind that outlines are required to follow a format style (eg. APA). An outline is simply a way to *organize* your ideas and information. The following is an abbreviated version of what is often referred to as a formal or “traditional” outline. It can be expanded or condensed to fit the scope of your essay or research project. The example below is based on the five-paragraph essay model.

I. Introduction

A. Thesis Statement

The **Thesis Statement (TS)** will be the last 1-3 sentences of the introduction.

II. Body paragraph #1 – Topic Sentence #1

A. Supporting Evidence

1. Name of & quote from source
2. Name of & quote from source #2 (if applicable)

B. Explanation

1. Explanation of source
2. Explanation of source #2 (if applicable)

C. So What?

Supporting Evidence

Integrate an appropriate example, such as a quote, statistic, case study, etc.

Explanation

Explain how this evidence supports your topic sentence. Try to develop your explanation in 2-4 sentences.

III. Body paragraph #2 – Topic Sentence #2

A. Supporting Evidence

- 1.
- 2.

B. Explanation

- 1.
- 2.

C. So What?

So What?

What’s significant or important about the ideas (topic sentence + evidence + explanation) in this paragraph? Remind your reader how all this connects back to the TS.

IV. Body paragraph #3 – Topic Sentence #3

A. Supporting Evidence

B. Explanation

C. So What?

The **TS** is the first 1-3 sentences of the conclusion. It should be “rephrased” here rather than repeated verbatim. Avoid simply summarizing the main points in the conclusion: synthesize them.

V. Conclusion

A. Rephrase thesis statement

B. Bring closure by going from specific to broad

To see what a complete outline, refer to the model below. The thesis statement has been taken from the Thesis Statement Guide section of the Ashford Writing Center.

I. Introduction

A. Thesis Statement

Although there are educational television programs, parents should regulate the amount of television their children watch because it is not always intellectually stimulating, it can distort a child's perception of reality, and it inhibits social interaction.

II. Body paragraph #1 - Topic Sentence #1

While television has the potential to offer programs that can be seen as educational supplements, too much television has an even greater potential for turning children into passive viewers and getting in the way of intellectual stimulation.

A. Supporting Evidence

As a recent article from the University of Michigan Health Systems (2008) maintains, "Too much television can negatively affect early brain development. This is especially true at younger ages, when learning to talk and play with others is so important" (qtd. in "Television").

B. Explanation

Indeed, too much television can be detrimental to cognitive development because preschool-aged children need physical interaction, and television for older children acts as an unhealthy replacement for reading and being read to. Children need to engage in imaginative play; adolescents and teenagers benefit from getting fresh air and being more active.

C. So What?

While it would be too easy to dismiss every TV show directed at youths—in fact, PBS and Discovery Kids offer excellent programming—children's lives are increasingly centered around TV-watching, and thus, parents should regulate how much their kids are viewing regardless of content or perceived quality.

III. Body paragraph #2 - Topic Sentence #2

Moreover, with proper supervision or regulation, there are television programs that can distort a child's perception of reality.

A. Supporting Evidence

In the online article "How TV Affects Your Child," Dr. Mary Gavin (2008) points out that "TV characters often depict risky behaviors, such as smoking and drinking, and also reinforce gender-role and racial stereotypes."

B. Explanation

Certainly, seeing these types of behaviors and stereotypes exhibited by favorite

television personalities and encouraged by favorite shows can contradict with the values parents want to instill in their children, which can cause both tension and confusion. While television does have entertainment value, children cannot learn all the differences between right and wrong from it.

C. So What?

Although it is difficult to prevent children's total exposure to questionable social mores and limited multicultural representation in the media, parents can have some control by supervising their children's viewing as well as talk about what's portrayed on television.

IV. Body paragraph #3 - Topic Sentence #3

Finally, television can impede healthy relationship-building and impose on family time.

A. Supporting Evidence

For example, recent studies have found that the television is on most of the time in 51% of households and that "[k]ids with a TV in their bedroom spend an average of almost 1.5 hours more per day watching TV than kids without a TV in the bedroom" (qtd. in "Television").

B. Explanation

If children are spending this much time glued to their favorite television programs, and if parents do not have rules about how much is okay to watch, then children are not only spending less time on important cognitive development activities such as reading and doing homework, but they are also spending less time on social interaction with peers and important family time.

C. So What?

Given how long families are apart from each other during the week because of school and work, it is unfortunate that any extra time outside of those obligations should be wasted on watching television; therefore, regulation is one key approach to ensure a family's closeness and the strength of the parents' bond with their children.

V. Conclusion

A. Thesis Statement *rephrased*

Television can be both educational and entertaining for children; however, only in moderation. Thus, it's important that parents step in to supervise how much television their children watch as it can negatively affect their intellectual, psychological, and social development.