

Sample formal outline

The following formal outline brought order to Anna Orlov's research paper on Internet surveillance in the workplace.

Thesis: Although companies often have legitimate concerns that lead them to monitor employees' Internet usage—from expensive security breaches to reduced productivity—the benefits of electronic surveillance are outweighed by its costs to employees' privacy and autonomy.

- I. Although employers have always monitored employees, electronic surveillance is more efficient.
 - A. Employers can gather data in large quantities.
 - B. Electronic surveillance can be continuous.
 - C. Electronic surveillance can be conducted secretly, with keystroke logging programs.
- II. Some experts argue that employers have legitimate reasons to monitor employees' Internet usage.
 - A. Unmonitored employees could accidentally breach security.
 - B. Companies are legally accountable for online actions of employees.
- III. Despite valid concerns, employers should value employee morale and autonomy and avoid creating an atmosphere of distrust.
 - A. Setting the boundaries for employee autonomy is difficult in the wired workplace.
 - 1. Using the Internet is the most popular way of wasting time at work.
 - 2. Employers can't tell easily if employees are working or surfing the Web.
 - B. Surveillance can create resentment among employees.
 - 1. Web surfing can relieve stress, and restricting it can generate tension between managers and workers.
 - 2. Enforcing Internet usage can seem arbitrary.
- IV. Surveillance may not increase employee productivity, and trust may benefit it.
 - A. It shouldn't matter to the company how many hours salaried employees work as long as they get the job done.
 - B. Casual Internet use can actually benefit companies.
 - 1. The Internet may spark business ideas.
 - 2. The Internet may suggest ideas about how to operate more efficiently.
- V. Employees' rights to privacy are not well defined by the law.
 - A. Few federal guidelines exist on electronic surveillance.
 - B. Employers and employees are negotiating the boundaries without legal guidance.
 - C. As technological capabilities increase, there will be an increased need to define boundaries.

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