

SAMPLE OUTLINE (OF SAMPLE PAPER)

TITLE

Milgram's experiments: No excuse for obedience.

THESIS

Most participants in Milgram's obedience experiments behaved deplorably.

DEFINITIONS

- *Deplorable* behavior: behavior that is seriously wrong and lacks an adequate excuse.
- *Obedient* participant: participant who went at least up to 225 volts.
- *Nonsuspicious* participant: participant who was certain or at least highly confident that the learner was getting painful shocks.

ARGUMENT FOR THE THESIS

Premise 1: Most participants were nonsuspiciously obedient.

Premise 2: Nonsuspicious obedience was deplorable.

Conclusion (=Thesis): Most participants behaved deplorably.

Justification for premise 1: 80% of participants were obedient.
About 80% of participants were nonsuspicious
(according to a follow-up questionnaire).

About 64% of participants were nonsuspiciously obedient.

Justification for premise 2: Nonsuspicious obedience was seriously wrong (it violated the duty to avoid acting so as to inflict severe pain on an innocent and nonconsenting person).
Nonsuspicious obedience was not adequately excused.

Nonsuspicious obedience was deplorable.

OBJECTION 1 (TO PREMISE 1)

Given the learner's apparently extreme suffering, the experimenter's imperturbability was incongruous.

Most participants must have seriously doubted that the learner was getting painful shocks.

REPLY 1a (TO [PREMISE OF] OBJECTION 1)

Participants who relied on the experimenter's reassurance that the shocks were not dangerous may have interpreted the experimenter's imperturbability as due to a blasé attitude.

The experimenter's imperturbability was not incongruous.

REPLY 1 (TO [CONCLUSION OF] OBJECTION 1)

Most participants protested repeatedly or "were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, ...".

Most participants were nonsuspicious.

REJOINDER 1 (TO [REASONING OF] REPLY 1)

In a stage magician's trick in which a volunteer is strapped into a guillotine and another volunteer is requested to trip the release lever, the latter volunteer is likely to feel nervous despite knowing that it's only a trick.

The participants' nervousness does not show that they were nonsuspicious.

RESPONSE 1 (TO [REASONING OF] REJOINDER 1)

The volunteer is unlikely to protest or disobey the magician's request.

Most participants protested and many eventually disobeyed the experimenter's requests.

The analogy in Rejoinder 1 is weak.

(Please continue the outline as an exercise.)