Basic Outline for a Research Paper

A paper’s structure will include several basic parts:

- **Introduction.** In the introduction, you’ll give an overview of your subject matter for the reader. This provides some context for your thesis statement, which provides a concise summation of your overall argument. It’s often useful to open your paper with a quote or a statistic, but this isn’t always necessary.

- **Body.** The body clearly presents the main points contained in your thesis, and is usually divided up into three or more paragraphs. You should always use strong examples and evidence from your sources to back up any claims that you make, providing support for your thesis.

- **Conclusion.** The concluding paragraph usually restates your thesis, and ties your paper together into a cohesive whole with a brief summation of each point made in the body.

Here’s a sample research paper outline in alphanumeric format that you can use as a general guide for writing your own paper:

I. Introduction
   A. Relevant Quote or attention grabbing fact (not required)
   B. Summary of current knowledge about topic
   C. Brief discussion of controversy about topic
   D. Thesis Statement (a short statement, usually one sentence that states the main idea, point, or claim of your essay)

II. First Topic to be Discussed/Body Paragraph 1
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Relevant facts
      1. Fact or issue-details and explanation
      2. Fact or issue-details and explanation
   C. Discussion of relevant facts

III. Second Topic to be Discussed/Body Paragraph 2
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Relevant facts
      1. Fact or issue-details and explanation
      2. Fact or issue-details and explanation
      3. Fact or issue-details and explanation
   C. Discussion of relevant facts

IV. Third Topic to be Discussed/Body Paragraph 3
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Relevant facts
      1. Fact or issue-details and explanation
      2. Fact or issue-details and explanation
   C. Discussion of relevant facts

V. Conclusion
   A. Restate thesis
   B. Summarize points from body