This worksheet will help you create a plan for your paper. Write your response to each of the following in the space below:

1. Has the instructor given any specific guidelines about the organization, thesis, introduction or conclusion? Write these here:

2. Write a points-to-make list. This is an informal list that will allow you to examine and revise your ideas before you form a thesis and plan. Look back over your brainstorming and research notes and highlight the items that you think would be effective in the essay. Don't worry about relationships between ideas just yet; try to be as inclusive as you can. Write what you highlight below.

At this stage, don't worry if the items are not all related to each other, if there are too many of them, if they are too broad/narrow or irrelevant, or if they are opinions. Also, don't try to write a thesis quite yet. Right now you are just trying to review all the options.
3. Now review the list you made and narrow it; are certain items related to each other? Group those together. Are there some items you don't have any evidence for, or that seem irrelevant or uninteresting? Omit them.

4. Order the remaining items (#3) from most important to least important.

5. You should now be able to decide which of the most important items you would like to include in your essay. Remember, you cannot cover all aspects of any topic, so focus on what you find most effective for your essay. List the items you would like to cover here, keeping in mind that they should represent paragraphs or sections in your essay. Also, do you need to provide background in your essay? Do you need to recognize opposing views? Do you have to incorporate research? Don't forget these items.

6. Form a thesis and write it below. (See ‘Thinking About Your Thesis” Worksheet.) Your thesis and the items from #5 above must be clearly related.
7. Decide how you would like to order the paragraphs (items from #5 above): background, opposing views, general to specific, least to most important, problem to solution, cause to effect, etc. Where will all these things go? Write a tentative order below.

8. Look at the order above. Are you satisfied with it? Show it to another person and ask his/her opinion. Is the organization logical and clear?

9. Plug your ideas from #7 into an outline. You can provide as much or little detail here as you desire; it depends on your preference. Some people just write down general ideas, and others include details such as quotes from sources.

I. Introduction
   a. Attention getter
   b. Topic
   c. Thesis

II. Body Paragraph 1
   a. Topic Sentence/claim
   b. Support for claim (evidence)
   c. Explanation of support/evidence

III. Body Paragraph 2
   a. Topic Sentence/claim
   b. Support for claim (evidence)
   c. Explanation of support/evidence
IV. Body Paragraph 3  
   a. Topic Sentence/claim  
   b. Support for claim (evidence)  
   c. Explanation of support/evidence

V. Body Paragraph 4  
   a. Topic Sentence/claim  
   b. Support for claim (evidence)  
   c. Explanation of support/evidence

VI. Body Paragraph 5  
   a. Topic Sentence/claim  
   b. Support for claim (evidence)  
   c. Explanation of support/evidence

VII. Conclusion

Note: the outline template here is only a guide; there are infinite ways to organize an essay. Feel free to experiment! Many of us learn the 5-paragraph essay, but you can (and often will) have more than 5 paragraphs. In addition, some people will devote the first body paragraph to background and history, while others will not cover those items at all; some writers will refute the opposing views in different places in the essay; it depends on your topic and audience.