Title: All papers need one! It should capture the attention of the reader and give an insight into your perspective on the topic.

Thesis Statement: The strength of a term paper depends on the strength of the thesis statement. Although literary style allows placement of the thesis statement in various places in the opening paragraphs, it is perhaps usual to place it at either the beginning or the ending of the introductory paragraph. The thesis statement should make an assertion about some subject, clearly outline your purpose in writing the paper, guide the organization of the paper, and provide the reader with a focus while reading the rest of the paper.

Introductory Paragraph(s): Perhaps with some creative additions of context and foundation, the paper’s beginning is an opportunity to overview the intended subject and argument. All of the major ideas discussed in the paper should be included in the introduction. Some writers claim that once you have written a good introduction, your paper is almost done. The introduction is crucial in the overall effect of your paper; it sets the theme and tone of your paper. Avoid using quotations in your introduction, unless they are critical to your paper’s initial development.

Body: The body of the paper is an exposition of your viewpoint and the supporting argument of your thesis with content other than your own ideas. That is, you are essentially using evidence to prove your thesis. All of the examples, analogies, background, quotes or references from experts need to be directed at supporting your thesis. Because the “heart” of your paper is the development of your argument (i.e. “proof,” help the reader build connections between your argument and your claims. All evidence should be included only because it is important to your paper, not because it is interesting or fills space. Also, a good paper (and argument) gives attention to evidence or claims that may oppose your thesis.

Conclusion: Use it to bring the make the conclusion (i.e. your thesis) a natural result of your argument. Avoid including quotes, unless they are fundamental to your paper’s conclusion. Restate the concepts/argument of the paper in an appealing manner and leave the reader with a satisfying conclusion.

Additional information:
1. Citing sources
   - Direct quotes must be cited.
   - Ideas not your own that are unique to a given writer must be cited.
   - All references to literary works must be cited by page. e.g. (Watson, 1986, p. 34) or (Watson, p. 34)
   - You cite sources for two reasons: (i) To avoid plagiarism, and (ii) To give support to your position from authorities
• Limit the number of citations in each paragraph. 2-3 is a max number to shoot for in a paragraph.

2. Develop paragraphs well. Use a variety of sentence structures. “String together” your sources skillfully. Expand the ideas contained in the sources so that your paper doesn’t sound like a collection of quotes from other people.

3. Avoid grammar and spelling errors. Try to use 3rd person. Choose active verbs, thereby eliminating unnecessary passive constructions. Eliminate sentence fragments, misplaced modifiers, lack of verb agreement, or pronouns without clear referents. That is, help your readers, not hinder them.

4. At the end of the paper, provide a complete list of your references.

Purpose of an Outline

The outline is the bare-bones structure for your paper. It should begin with a statement of your thesis, with no embellishment. Then, the subsequent “steps” in the outline are statements of the major aspects of your argument for the thesis. Once written, the outline both dictates and guides the writing of the paper, as the task now becomes adding “flesh” to the bare-bones structure.

Consider this example, again based on our in-class content explorations…but with a slightly different focus than the other outline discussed.

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Solving Polynomial Equations: A Reflection of Societal Context and Culture

Thesis: The development of techniques for solving polynomial equations closely reflects societal views regarding the use of mathematics in practical situations, the doing of mathematics as a theoretical discipline, and the need for closure or completeness.

I. Introduction
II. Views on the Use of Mathematics in Practical Situations
   A. Egyptian/Babylonian recipes for practical applications
   B. Greek Use of Geometry to Do Algebra
   C. Chinese Creation of Rule-Based Solutions
III. Views on the Doing of Mathematics as a Theoretical Discipline
   A. Greek focus on Restricted Tools
   B. Interplay between Algebra and Geometry
   C. Seeking Patterns
   D. Role of Proof
   E. Numerical Approximations vs. Exact Answers
IV. The Need for Closure or Completeness
   A. Egyptian/Babylonian Lack of Proof of Their Techniques
   B. Al-Khwarizmi’s set of Rules for Different Cases (Positive Parameters)
   C. Khayyam’s Insistence of Use of Conics to Solve Cubic Equations
   D. Italian Focus Finding a Formula for Polynomial of Degree n
V. Closure
VI. Initial List of References