Structure of a General Expository Essay

The following maps a commonly used structure for many academic essays. Use this outline to guide you as you compose your own argument, research or even descriptive essay.

**Introduction**

- **Opening Sentence**
  Start your paper with a general statement about your topic that catches the reader’s attention, a relevant quotation, question, anecdote, fascinating fact, definition, analogy, the position opposing one you will take, or a dilemma that needs a solution.

- **Context**
  Provide the information the reader will need to understand the topic.

- **Thesis Statement**
  State your arguable position on the topic that you will support with evidence in your body paragraphs.

**Body Paragraphs**

- **Topic Sentence**
  Provide the main idea of the paragraph.

- **Supporting Evidence**
  Include specific textual evidence: cited quotes, paraphrases or summary; or evidence that supports your thesis from other sources: anecdotes, first-person interviews or your own experience.

- **Analysis**
  Explain to the reader the significance of the evidence you have provided. Think about why you chose to include it. How does the piece of evidence support your thesis?

- **Transition**
  Connect each paragraph with a sentence or two that demonstrates how each idea leads into the next, and how they work together to support your position.

**Conclusion**

Provide the reader an overview of the main ideas you discussed, but also be sure to highlight the progression of your thought process, offer solutions, next steps or present new questions that your paper generated. Don’t only restate your thesis but show the significance of your synthesis of the information.
**My Outline**

Try applying this structure to your own writing: write sentences for the corresponding elements of your introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion in the space provided below.

### Introduction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin your paper with a <strong>opening sentence</strong> or “hook” about your topic that catches the reader’s attention. Reference the list on the front for ideas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include <strong>context</strong>: provide the information the reader will need to understand the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State your <strong>thesis</strong>, your arguable position on the topic. What side will you take? What will you prove in your paper? What are you going to explore?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### One Practice Body paragraph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write a general <strong>topic sentence</strong> that states the main idea of the paragraph for your first body paragraph, or for one you are having difficulty organizing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write down the specific textual <strong>evidence</strong> or evidence from other sources that you are using to support your thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyze</strong> your evidence: tell the reader what is significant or important about this evidence. How does the piece of evidence support your thesis? Why did you choose to include it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t forget a transition sentence: Connect each paragraph with a sentence or two that demonstrates how each idea leads into the next.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusion:

| Make connections for the reader in your **conclusion**. You should refer back to your thesis, but don’t simply restate it. Use some of the following questions to guide you:  
  * Did you propose any solutions? Are there solutions yet to be discovered?  
  * What questions still need to be answered?  
  * What is the larger significance of the topic you chose to write about?  
  * What should the reader do or think after reading your paper? |