Structuring a Paper

Here are some tips on structuring a paper:

Introduction: Picture the introduction like an inverted pyramid, offering basic information related to the topic in the beginning, and honing it down with your thesis as the last sentence. Your professors will automatically look to the last sentence of your intro to try and find your thesis, and it’s best to make their job easier by not making them go looking for it. Your thesis should be clear and fully define the main idea of your entire paper.

Body: The body of your essay is where you provide the evidence you need to support your thesis. You are trying to prove your assertion, so you need to provide evidence and your own analysis in order to do this.

Topic Sentences: Your topic sentence should lay out the main idea of the paragraph and should also tie into your thesis in some way. Here, you state a point that you are trying to prove, in order to back up your thesis. Try and make your topic sentences cover one idea, which will help you hone your paragraphs more.

Body Paragraph: Every sentence in your body paragraph should work to prove the point you make in your topic sentence. You will need to use evidence from the text(s) you are writing about in order to support your ideas, and also go into a lot of detail explaining these, but make sure that your ideas are addressing the topic sentence. Most of the body is backing up evidence from the text in order to prove your point. Make sure you write enough to fully explain the quote and what it means, but try not to write more that that. If you find yourself getting bogged down by too many details, your topic sentence may be too broad. Consider breaking it up into separate paragraphs.

Evidence from the Text: These are your quotes. You use quotes from the text in order to give an example to back up your topic sentence. Your quotes should be no longer than what you need in order to get your point across, and so the reader knows what you’re talking about. Don’t be afraid to use a long quote, but make sure that what you are writing is not filler just to add length. When choosing a quote, ask yourself how this quote shows what I mentioned in the topic.