Research Paper Structure: Expository & Argument

I. Introduction/Opening
   A. Build the case for your thesis through one of these forms:
      1. Establish the broad topic and move toward your narrow topic
      2. Provide an example or experience as context for the reader
      3. Set a scene for the problem or show some startling facts
      4. Ask the questions that lead to your thesis as the answer
   B. End the introduction with a THESIS STATEMENT in which you do the following:
      1. State a specific and narrow topic
      2. Indicate the argument being made (in other words, your position, claim, or assertion).

II. Background Section: Provides a context for the research that will follow this section. This may include any of the following:
   A. History
   B. Context of thesis:
      1. Problem or need
      2. Environment or situation
   C. Theoretical background
      1. For empirical research, trace back through the body of published research that supports a theory that is a premise for your argument
      2. Create operational definitions of key theories or terms that will be used

III. Body: State the case and offer up evidence
   A. Present a clear plan of attack/strategy
      1. Divide into discernable sub-topics
      2. Use a logical pattern of organization. Always follow the pattern that makes the most logical sense with (1) your topic, (2) the evidence/research you have found, and (3) your argument.
         Here are some options:
         a) Chronological
         b) Sequential
         c) Least important to most important
         d) Cause and Effect
         e) Macro level consideration to Micro level considerations (or reverse)
         f) Problem to Solution (note: business and technical sciences often follow this model of Problem→Causes/Context→Analysis→Findings→Proposal→Implementation→Testing/Challenges→Findings→Outcome).
   B. Within each section or the body (which will likely include more than 1 paragraph), organize each paragraph around ONE key point
      1. Use a topic sentence for each paragraph: name the point being made, and connect it to thesis
      2. Align content/evidence with that topic
   C. Build each paragraph. Use the following list of paragraph elements to help you to be sure you have a fully developed idea in each paragraph. While I list them in an order, you may alter this sequence to suit your content.
      1. General statement of the topic for the paragraph (topic sentence)
      2. Explanation of that statement
      3. Evidence: examples, quotes, statistics/data, descriptions, experiences
      4. Analysis: what that evidence means (steps 3 and 4 may repeat as you show connections between one source and another)
      5. Synthesis: show the connections among ideas in the paragraph and with your assertion
   D. Signpost your argument: remind the reader of past key points, and/or project what will come next
   E. Show continuity of argument: transitions and comparisons or contrasts

IV. Conclusion
   A. Place your main point in perspective: make it “succinct, bold [yet] complete enough to gather in all the major points of the essay” (Source: Strunk & White, Elements of Style).
   B. Provide a future projection or final thought.
   C. Give your ending emotional appeal.
   D. Bring the paper “full circle” (reconnect to tone or content of introduction)
Worksheet for Expository Research

Assigned Topic: ____________________________________________________________

Refined Topic/working thesis: _____________________________________________

Problem Statement: ______________________________________________________

Background information: ________________________________________________

Chain of Reasoning (ideas that support & explain the working thesis, shown in a logical sequence):

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Why this issue matters: __________________________________________________