Outlining Worksheet

An outline is the skeleton of your paper. This is where you come up with the shape of your paper. For example:

1. Opening/Introduction

The opening/introduction tells the topic of the conversation and the stance on the matter. The stance is expressed in the thesis statement, which usually appears at the end of the introductory paragraph.

1. Reason 1
   1. Support
2. Reason 2
   1. Support
3. Reason 3
   1. Support
4. Reason 4
   1. Support
5. Closing

The closing ties reasons 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 together in a way that connects them to the real world and makes your stance completely clear to the reader.

This is the basic format for any paper. It’s a good way to organize thoughts and get down ideas about your topic before they get lost in space. Don’t worry about the amount of reasons you come up with as long as it’s more than 3. This is important because you can always cut out or combine reasons with very little support to enhance your paper. It’s more difficult to come up with a good idea at the last minute.

When you can’t come up with anything, take your topic and turn it into a question. Another hint is to come up with at least one counterargument, or point, and defend it. This shows your audience that you have done sufficient research on your topic; this demonstrates that even with that alternative argument, the side that you have chosen to defend is the best choice. When you show that you know your entire subject, it makes your argument well rounded.

Don’t overthink it. Stress only makes coming up with good ideas harder. Remember to read your outline out loud or talk through it with someone; sometimes you pick up ideas from others.