BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: INTRO., BODY & CONCLUSION

Figuring out how to organize your essay (deciding what information to put where) is one of the big challenges in this (and any) research project. I’ve put this handout together to clarify what information is required in which sections, and also to help you create and organize each section.

I. Introduction:
This section of your essay is similar to your project overview. Your introduction should contain some of the same information, but it is NOT an exact replica of your overview. This is what it should include:

A) A thoroughly detailed account of how and why you became interested in this topic. Why did you choose this topic to research? What drew you to it? Remember, the first requirement of this project was to choose a topic you found compelling.

B) A summary of the questions you began your search with. Articulate what it was you hoped to find out. Remember, however, to cast this in the PAST tense, since you are done with your search.

C) Your methodology. This should be at least a paragraph long, and it should summarize your research methods. Where did you find your primary sources of information? Whom did you interview? Summarize your best, primary methods and sources of information.

D) An explanation of what you DID discover. Focus on the most significant insights you gained as a result of this search. How did your beliefs about this topic change? What are the most significant insights you gained as a result of this search?

This should be at least one paragraph long, and it constitutes the thesis of your essay.

II. Body Sections
Develop body sections that focus on ONE part of your topic. In essence, you should think of each body section as a mini-essay within the larger essay. Your body sections should also be subtitled. You’ll have to decide, based on your research, what body sections to develop. Ideally, these should grow organically out of your thesis.
Some common body sections include a history/definition or background section about your topic; the pros and cons of choosing a particular career; a typical day-in-the-life of a particular career; and current issues or controversies for essays focused on issues. Again, the body sections need to be particular to your topic, and they need to be comprehensive in terms of covering the questions and conclusions you identify in your introduction.

**You should have at 3-4 body sections in your essay.** This is in addition to your introduction and conclusion.

Each body section should be between 1 and 3 pages long. Each section should also draw upon several sources of information or research. It is important that each body section draw upon AT LEAST two separate sources for support. That means that you should avoid a body section that is either a) only one paragraph long, or b) only draws upon one article, or one source, for support.

III. Conclusion

Like your introduction and body sections, your conclusion should be at least 1 to 3 pages long. **Unlike your introduction, however, your conclusion should be subtitled. The subtitle should reflect your most important insights about this search.** Like all conclusions, you will need to elaborate on what you discovered and explain its significance. Each essay will have particular needs, but some common approaches to this section include a discussion or forecast of the future (especially for essays that focus on careers or social issues/controversies). Students also end with an analysis of the controversy and its likely impact on society. However, as with the body sections, your conclusion must grow out of your introduction; it will be specific to the needs of your essay.