**Example Outline for Research Paper**

Title: The Secret Power of Mealtime

**Introduction & Background Information –** a broad overview &/or brief history of your topic (paraphrased or quoted – vary your statements between the two)

**EXAMPLE:** Throughout American history, the family table was almost a sacred object. It was given that if one ate, one ate with his or her family. Meal times were set in stone. For many families, at least one hour a day was spent around the table, sharing the news of the day or planning the next. Today’s society is totally different. Only 26% of American families eat together at least five nights a week (Hailey 45). Instead of gathering around the table, family members begin their day by grabbing Pop Tarts to eat on the bus or stopping at Starbuck’s for a latte. Dinner time finds family members in different locations. Because families are not eating together, they have weaker bonds, and in general meals became less healthy than they were when families were gathering around the table to eat meals. Since meals were consumed on-the-run, the meals and snacks became less healthy, and, as a nation, we began an unhealthy decline. In recent years, we have, however, tried to overturn those unhealthy habits. Now, American culture is bombarded with messages about healthy eating. From an early age, children are taught about the benefits of healthy foods through use of games, music, art, and role play. Many parents meticulously monitor every bite their children ingest, even going so far as using phone apps to keep count of calories. However, if a true difference is going to be made, as a culture, our families must go back to the table either figuratively or literally. Because families are not eating together, they have weaker bonds than in previous generations. Children struggle in school and often lack structure and discipline (Landt interview).

**Counter Claim Paragraph –** what are the two biggest arguments against your stance?

Counter One:

We are, overall, a healthier nation.

Counter Two:

Industries are making changes in the way they are producing foods to make them healthier.

Thesis statement: Eating together as a family has a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of children. Children who eat with their families on a regular basis have increased academic achievement, self-esteem, and family bonds.

**Main Point #1**

Topic sentence: Eating together increases academic achievement.

Supporting details (at least three):

1. According to the Family institute study, children who eat at least 12 meals with their family each week have a GPA of 3.5. Those who eat together only 5 times a week have a GPA of 2.3 (Smith 76).
2. Students who eat with their families at least 75% of the time scored 260 points higher on the SAT than those who ate together only 25% of the time (Johnson 25).
3. 83% of those students who eat with their families at least 50% of the time graduate from high school within four years (“Wake County Public Schools” par. 7).

**Main Point #2**

Topic Sentence: In addition to increase academic achievement, children who eat with their families have greater self-esteem than children who eat alone.

Supporting details (at least three):

1. When interviewed by psychologists, 88% of students who ate with their families believed that they would go to college (Moore 26).

**Main Point #3**

Topic sentence:

Supporting details (at least three)

**Conclusion**

Restate thesis statement: Children who eat with their families on a regular basis are healthier and happier than their counterparts who eat alone. Their academic skills, self-esteem, and family bonds are strengthened as the result of time spent around the table.

Draw conclusions, generalizations, applications, etc.:

Parents who want their children to succeed should make family meal time a priority. Whether families eat micro-waved dinners, fast food from the nearest burger joint, or even tacos in the car, eating together seems to make a huge difference. Who knows? Perhaps by turning off the television, closing the laptop, and putting down the iPod, children from these families may discover the cure for cancer, find renewable sources of energy, or broker peace in the Middle East.