How to Create a Thesis Statement & Outline?

I. What is a thesis statement?
A thesis statement is usually a sentence that states your argument to the reader. It usually appears in the first paragraph of an essay.

II. Why do I need to write a thesis statement for a paper?
Your thesis statement states what you will discuss in your essay. Not only does it define the scope and focus of your essay, it also tells your reader what to expect from the essay. A thesis statement can be very helpful in constructing the outline of your essay. Also, your instructor may require a thesis statement for your paper.

III. How do I create a thesis statement?
A thesis statement is not a statement of fact. It is an assertive statement that states your claims and that you can prove with evidence. It should be the product of research and your own critical thinking. There are different ways and different approaches to write a thesis statement.

Here are some steps you can try to create a thesis statement:
• Start out with the main topic and focus of your essay.
Example: youth gangs + prevention and intervention programs

• Make a claim or argument in one sentence.
Example: Prevention and intervention programs can stop youth gang activities.

• Revise the sentence by using specific terms.
Example: Early prevention programs in schools are the most effective way to prevent youth gang involvement.

• Further revise the sentence to cover the scope of your essay and make a strong statement.
Example: Among various prevention and intervention efforts that have been made to deal with the rapid growth of youth gangs, early school-based prevention programs are the most effective way to prevent youth gang involvement.
IV. Can I revise the thesis statement in the writing process?
Sure. In fact, you should keep the thesis statement flexible and revise it as needed. In the process of researching and writing, you may find new information that falls outside the scope of your original plan and want to incorporate it into your paper. Or you probably understand your thoughts more and shift the focus of your paper. Then you will need to revise your thesis statement while you are writing the paper.

V. Why do I need to make an outline when I already have a thesis statement?
An outline is the "road map" of your essay in which you list the arguments and subtopics in a logical order. A good outline is an important element in writing a good paper. An outline helps to target your research areas, keep you within the scope without going off-track, and it can also help to keep your argument in good order when writing the essay.

VI. How do I make an outline?
You list all the major topics and subtopics with key points that support them. Put similar topics and points together and arrange them in a logical order.

Include an Introduction, a Body, and a Conclusion in your outline. You can make an outline in a list format or a chart format.