




Tips from the Writing Center: Developing a Thesis Statement

<p>What is a thesis statement?</p> <p>A thesis statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes an argumentative assertion about a topic; it states the conclusions that you have reached about your topic. • Promises the reader the scope, purpose, and direction of your paper. • Is focused and specific enough to be "proven" within the boundaries of your paper. • Generally is located near the end of the introduction; sometimes, in a long paper, the thesis will be expressed in several sentences or in an entire paragraph. • Identifies the relationships between the pieces of evidence that you are using to support your argument. 	<p>What does a thesis statement look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although most readers of _____ have argued that _____, closer examination shows that _____. <i>This type of thesis defines how the stance of the paper differs from what seems obvious to others.</i> • _____ uses _____ and _____ to prove that _____. <i>This type of thesis makes an argument about the methods and conclusion of a source or research study.</i> • Phenomenon X is a result of the combination of _____, _____, and _____. <i>This type of thesis makes an argument about the cause of an event or phenomenon.</i>
<p>What is another way of conceptualizing a thesis statement?</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>The thesis statement is the picture of a jigsaw puzzle on the outside of its box. It gives the overview, but not the details of how to solve the puzzle.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>A thesis statement is the road map to your paper. It tells readers what to expect.</p> </div> </div>	<p>What is a thesis statement <i>not</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question • A statement of common knowledge or undisputed fact • Three points / a list • A quote • Your personal opinion • Vague, wishy-washy, or both sides • Your topic • Broad generalizations

Brainstorming and Narrowing the Thesis Statement

Brainstorm question: What do you wonder about your topic? What intrigues you or interests you?



Moving from general to specific	Examples	Your assignment and idea
<i>Topic:</i> General area of interest in subject	Justice in America	
<i>Focused topic:</i> A subject that has been limited, so as to not be too broad.	The death penalty.	
<i>General thesis:</i> The main assertion you want to make.	The death penalty should be abolished.	
<i>Specific thesis:</i> A general thesis and main supporting evidence.	The death penalty should be abolished because it is fundamentally immoral.	

Revising Your Thesis

Be flexible and let your critical thinking and research guide your revisions. When your paper is finished, the thesis statement becomes a tool for your reader. It tells the reader what you have learned about your topic and what evidence led you to your conclusion. Before putting the finishing touches on your writing, consider:

- Does my thesis answer a question? (from the assignment prompt or your research question)
- Does my thesis clearly express a position that others might challenge or oppose?
- Could my thesis statement be more specific? How?
- Does my thesis pass the “so what?” test? Does it clearly express why the issue is important?
- Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?

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