

Developing a Thesis Statement

Introduction

You will be asked to write a thesis statement for the majority of your essays. There exist a couple types of thesis statements. However, this handout focuses on the argumentative thesis which is the type primarily required of students.

Why do you need a thesis? Thesis statements allow you to organize your essays in a way that makes your argument easier to follow. A thesis statement will help keep you focused on the argument or analysis at hand. Readers know, usually in the first paragraph, what your essay is about and the conclusions you have reached.

The Thesis Statement Defined

FACT: A Thesis Statement:

Is **F**ocused and specific

Is **A**ssertive

Can be argued

Takes a stand on an issue or your topic. You will justify it with research in your essay.

A thesis statement is an argumentative statement that you work to *prove* in your paper. Unlike a research question, you must take a side and declare an argument with a thesis statement.

Developing a thesis statement

Take these three steps to develop your thesis:

- Select a Topic
- Start with a Research Question
- Write a Thesis Statement

Select a Topic

Sometimes, your instructor will assign you a topic. However, most of the time, you will be able to choose a topic of interest to you.

To select a topic, consider the following:

- What does your assignment ask you to do?
- What assertion can be made about your topic?
- What is the main point of your topic?

Start with a Research Question

A research question is an analytical question that you work to answer in your paper.

You may already have a clear idea for your argument. However, most of us subconsciously ask and answer a question during the research and writing process to form our opinions and assertions.

You may not be sure what you want to assert about your topic. Start by asking yourself a question about your topic. As you begin researching, you may see a pattern develop that answers the research question. The answer can be turned into a thesis statement. The material you used to answer your research question then becomes documentation to support or challenge your thesis.

Steps to Formulating a Research Question

1. Start with a topic.
2. Narrow and focus your topic.
3. Formulate a question you want to ask about the topic.
4. Narrow the question, if possible.

Write a Thesis Statement

Write an assertive statement in one or two sentences. Be as specific and concise as possible. And remember, a thesis statement should be arguable.


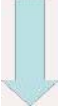
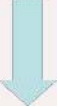


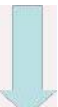


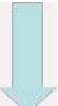


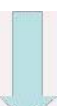

Your thesis statement should include three things:

- Your assertion.
- Supporting evidence for your assertion—the reason(s) why your argument is valid.
- The order in which your argument will be presented. This may be implicit or explicit.

Tips

The thesis statement you begin with may change for the final version of your essay. This is ok and an acceptable part of the writing process. Revise your final thesis statement to accurately state the argument presented in your essay.

Check out the chart below for examples on the process for developing a thesis.

	Example #1	Example #2
Topic 	Shakespeare's Comedies 	Cartoons 
Narrow/ Focus 	The role of women in Shakespeare's comedies 	Cartoons and violence 
Research Question 	What role do women play in Shakespeare's comedies? 	Are cartoons too violent? 
Narrow Question 	Do the women in Shakespeare's comedies act differently from women in their contemporary society? 	How does violence in cartoons affect children? 
Formulate a Thesis 	The female characters in Shakespeare's comedies blur the gender roles set for women, allowing them more freedom than contemporary women of their time.	Violence in cartoons may lead to higher levels of playground violence in schools; however, parental supervision of television viewing behavior can help counter aggressive behavior.