

Thesis Statements 101

A well-written thesis statement, usually expressed in one sentence, is the most important sentence in your entire paper. It should both summarize for your reader the position you will be arguing and set up the pattern of organization you will use in your discussion. A thesis sentence is not a statement of accepted fact; it is the position that needs the proof you will provide in your argument. Your thesis should reflect the full scope of your argument--no more and no less; avoid using a thesis statement that is too broad to be defended within the scope of your paper or too narrow to be an appropriate response to the assignment.

Remember your ultimate goal:

_____ because _____, _____, and _____.
(state your position) (reason #1) (reason #2)

(reason #3)

Step 1: Understanding the Prompt

- Before writing your thesis statement, you must have a clear understanding of what you're being asked to respond to
- Going through the steps of the **decoding** process will be your first step toward a strong thesis statement

Step 2: Take a Position

- No "I think"
- Pick a side – or a middle ground may be appropriate.
- Use power words (several, many, numerous)
- Example: Snickers is the best candy bar for several reasons.

Step 3: Add Projected Plan (reasons)

- Start with one, then add to that
- Key word: *because*
- Number of reasons corresponds to number of body paragraphs
- Example: Snickers is the best candy bar because it satisfies hunger and combines nuts with caramel.
- If students get stuck here, they probably haven't done enough pre-writing and therefore don't have enough reasons to choose from. Go back and do more **pre-writing**.

Step 4: Revise Thesis Statement

- ⇒ Is this ONE complete sentence? Y/N
- ⇒ Does this have a clear position? Y/N
- ⇒ Does it have three reasons? Y/N
- ⇒ Do the reasons make sense? Y/N

If you answered "no" for any of the above questions, rewrite the thesis below: