

What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement asserts what you think and what you intend to prove. It serves as the basis of your argument and guides your entire essay.

Simple equations for a thesis:

Specific topic + Argument/Perspective/Message = Thesis

Your argument + How you will support that argument = Thesis

How do I get a thesis?

A thesis is the result of a lot of thinking. You cannot write a thesis immediately after reading the assignment or conducting some research. Before you draft your thesis, you must collect and organize your ideas, look for connections between those ideas and think of the significance of those ideas. Is there something about the research that surprises you? Is there a pattern that is emerging from your ideas and points? Does something make you cringe and want to speak out?

Once you do this thinking, you will probably have a “preliminary thesis,” which is a main idea. This main argument is an idea you believe can be supported with research and evidence, but it will probably change as you begin writing.

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

A strong thesis should:

Take a position that others might challenge. If you cannot foresee any objections to your thesis, then it is not strong enough.

Watch out for keywords like “bad,” “all,” “good,” or “every” in your thesis. What makes something “bad”? What makes it “good”? General and sweeping phrases stop your thesis from being specific and strong.

Answer the questions “How?” and “Why”? Try to draft as many “how” and “why” questions as possible to ask your thesis. For example, if your thesis reads “Video game violence is negative on children,” try to ask the questions “How?” and “Why?” to make it better. How is violence negative? Why is it negative towards children? How can we change it? Why should I care? Asking your thesis these questions will make your thesis stronger and more specific.

Pass the “So What?” test? If a reader’s first response is, “So what? Why are you telling me this?” then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue. Ultimately, you want your thesis to have significance to your reader.

It is okay to revise your thesis! As you begin writing, you may find that your mind is changing or the research is pulling you in another direction. From time to time, you should revisit your thesis and rework it. In theory, it should be one of the first things you write in your essay and the last.

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