

Thesis Development- Part One

This assignment asks you to explore areas that will help you to draft a strong thesis statement:

1. **How to select a meaningful subject/topic.**
2. **How to consider your audience.**
3. **Creation of a working thesis.**

In the second part of this lesson, we will practice exploration of ideas and information that are relevant to the development of your thesis and overall argument. Today, however, we will practice an important part of essay development - the thesis.

A strong thesis provides a wonderful start on the road to a strong paper. Think of a thesis as your destination of interest on a map that you think your reader would like to visit. Your thesis is your statement of where you are planning to take your reader.

1. HOW TO SELECT A SUBJECT

Think of something that interests you in your reading. Was there a particular idea that the writer developed that you found interesting? Was there a character in a story that caught your interest? Are there certain themes in your reading that you find interesting? You find that you will write a better paper if you write about something that is interesting to you or impacts your life in a particular way.

2. HOW TO CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

The purpose of writing an essay is to allow others to see your writing. You want to communicate your thoughts and ideas with a particular reader or group of readers. Persons who come into contact with and read your writing are called your **audience**. Each of us is very diverse. We all represent different groups that define us. When you think of your audience you want to consider if they share your interests, beliefs and values or if they have different interests, beliefs and values. For instance, if you wanted to write a paper on the uniqueness of a dog's intelligence to a group of readers who own cats, how can you make your argument interesting to a group that has different interests from you? Try to identify your audience so that you can consider how to make meaningful connections to your reader through your writing.

3. CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT

It is expected that college-level writers can create a focused statement that is central to your overall idea. A thesis is usually one sentence and is found in your introductory paragraph. A thesis statement helps your reader know early on what your paper is about and your opinion on a

particular idea or subject. He or she can expect that you will develop your thesis throughout your paper.

Thesis statements rarely can be thought up in a matter of moments. Usually a writer has to work through the prewriting process in order to gather enough information to find his or her interest and create a strong statement. Once a writer has gotten his or her thoughts organized, can he or she began to create a thesis statement. Here are some guidelines for an effective thesis statement:

- A thesis statement must be a **complete sentence** with a subject and a debatable opinion or assessment about a subject.
- A thesis statement should be clear and free from ambiguous language.
- A thesis statement should be broad enough to develop a paper but narrow enough to focus on one particular subject.
- A thesis statement can be controversial, but should not insult the reader.

An Acceptable Thesis

"If professors gave additional brief exams at frequent intervals, students would be spurred to study more regularly, learn more, worry less, and perform better on midterms, finals and other papers and projects." - Patrick O'Mally, "More Testing, More Learning"

Why is this thesis statement acceptable?

- This thesis statement is a complete sentence.
- This thesis statement is clear and easy to understand without ambiguity.
- The thesis has a subject and an opinion.
- The thesis is broad enough to write an essay, but focused enough to explain one particular subject. The subject of the thesis above is the way in which professors give exams to their students. The opinion is if brief exams are given to students more frequently, then students will perform better. A student can write a short essay with this thesis and develop his or her idea well.

- The thesis statement is debatable, but does not insult the reader.

Other examples:

"The Detroit Lions' can expect a winning season if they make wise choices in this years' NFL Draft."

"The Atkins Diet is easy and safe to follow."

"If we're smart, we could make restoring the environment the biggest economic enterprise of our time, a huge source of jobs, profits and poverty alleviation." - Mark Hertsgaard, "A Global Green Deal"

An Unacceptable Thesis

"All professors give tests because they enjoy torturing their students."

Why is this thesis statement unacceptable?

- This is a sentence, but unfortunately it does allow for an enlightened academic argument.
- This statement is too broad. There are many types of professors and many types of tests. It would be a bit of a challenge to write a short essay with such a generalized and broad subject.
- The word "torturing" can mean different things to different people. What does the writer mean by using the word "torturing"? Does the writer suggest that a test does bodily harm to a student? Torturing in the context of this statement is highly problematic.
- This thesis lacks a **scope**. A scope allows for further development of an opinion. It would be challenging to develop this subject beyond a few sentences.

Other examples:

"The Detroit Lions are the name of an American football team in Detroit."

"The Atkins Diet is a diet that was introduced to the public four years ago."

"When will the world understand that the environment is significant to the future of humankind?"