

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Formulating Thesis Statements

WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?

- A thesis statement is the idea that **you** bring to your paper. It will be **supported** by published sources, but overall it is *your* opinion on these sources that is interesting to your reader
- A thesis informs the readers of the **intentions** of the writer. **Everything** you write in your paper should fit with this intention
- The thesis statement must be included in the introduction to your research paper or project, usually at the end of your introduction
- The first sentence of your thesis should **outline** your idea. The next sentence, sometimes called the **preview**, should tell your readers how you plan to support your thesis

DRAFTING A TENTATIVE THESIS STATEMENT

Making notes on research:

- Any kind of **comparisons or contrasts** in the presented information
- Any new information, about the topic, you didn't know before
- Note whether different authors have differing **opinions** about your topic
- Does current research nullify any earlier research on the same topic?

Drafting a 'tentative' statement:

- State your position clearly using **strong** and **specific** language
- Your statement should be **broad** enough to allow for all the sub-topics you will be exploring in the essay. Also, if your statement is broad enough, you can easily find resources to support your claim
- It should not be a mere statement of fact. It should present an **arguable yet defensible** point that your reader could agree or disagree with
- Keep in mind that the statement you begin with is your 'working' thesis. As you continue to research and find new evidence, you may **change** your position

SOME EXAMPLES OF THESIS STATEMENTS

Too Broad:

- "Cuts in education are major a concern of everyone in our province."
- "The 'baby boom' generation has changed history."

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Too Narrow:

- “In the last year, there have been over twenty public schools closed in our city.”
- “The members of the post-world war II generation, the baby boomers, make the largest single age group in Canada.”

Good Thesis Statements:

- “Despite its risks and side effects, lithium is an effective treatment for depression.”
- “Because the polygraph has not been proven reliable, even under the most controlled conditions, its use by private employers should be banned.”

TESTING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT:

- Does it make a claim/argument?
- Is it narrow/specific enough to focus your paper?
- Is it broad enough to allow a comprehensive discussion of supporting evidence and opposing views?
- Is there enough evidentiary support material available for your assertion?
- Based on further research, does it need any revision(s)?

Here are additional and valuable resources on writing thesis statements (that were adapted for this handout):

Delagrange, L., & Alvarado-Peters, E.C.. *Mini Lesson #29: Thesis Statements*. Kent State University English Department. The Writing Center @ KSU. Retrieved from <http://dept.kent.edu/english/WritingCent/thesis.doc>

Valenza, J. K. *Power Research Tools: Learning Activities & Posters*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2003

Wells, J. *Developing a thesis*. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/2/56/>