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.”
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):