

WRITING STRONG THESIS STATEMENTS

The Writing Centre

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What is a thesis statement?

- The main point of your essay
- The controlling idea of your essay
- A declaration of ideas to be developed in your essay
- An assertion
- An idea that you will argue, develop, prove or discuss in your essay

CHOOSE A TOPIC

- Choose a topic that meets the requirements of the assignment
- Your thesis statement will make a claim *about* your topic

**Q. What makes a good
thesis statement?**

A Good Thesis Statement Will...

- Be interesting
- Be precise and specific
- Address only *one* idea
- Be unified
- Make a point, argument or claim *about* your topic

To develop a thesis statement, ask yourself the question “why?” about your topic

Common Problems with Thesis Statements

1. too vague (not specific, not developed)

Globalization makes life difficult for people who live in developing countries for many different reasons.

Economic globalization has had a significant negative impact on emerging industries in developing countries, forcing citizens to work for first-world corporations, or to remain unemployed. Corporations continue to expand into African countries because the cost of labour is significantly lower than in North America. This pattern of dependence and exploitation makes it nearly impossible for Ghana to develop industries that would improve its economy and the quality of life of its citizens.

2. too general and
therefore too large to
attack in your paper

Modern artists have
always caused
controversy.

Through an examination of the work of three modern artists—Vincent Van Gogh, Jackson Pollock and Andres Serrano—I will address the relationship between artist and audience, and will show that it is necessary to push the boundaries of convention to invent new forms of visual art.

3. makes a **negative statement** rather than a positive one (it is difficult to write about what something is *not*, rather than what it *is*)

While a growing frustration with overspending at Versailles was one of the causes of the French Revolution, it was not the main cause.

While growing frustration with overspending at Versailles certainly contributed to the tensions that caused French Revolution, a shift in power within the bourgeois class was the most significant cause.

4. does not make a claim *about* the topic, but rather simply states the topic

This paper will address the
issue of women in
provincial politics in
Ontario.

Despite a shift in attitudes about women in positions of power, women still have not made significant progress in provincial politics. One of the best methods to correct this imbalance is to create assertiveness and confidence-building programs that are developed specifically for girls.

5. states the **obvious**
and thus is neither
interesting nor
informative

Stars have been around for billions of years and we cannot imagine a world without them.

Our fascination with the universe demonstrates the basic human need to believe in something greater than ourselves.

6. tries to address **too many ideas**

Joseph Conrad's stellar novel *The Heart of Darkness* displays the horrors of colonialism, greed and despair all taken to their extremes. It is a novel that pushes the envelope of literary conventions, employing such diverse symbolism as colour, animals and geographic locations.

Using Marlowe's transition from optimistic entrepreneur to insane tyrant as a symbol for the degeneration of imperial rule, Joseph Conrad explores the failings of colonialism.

Remember

- Your thesis makes a claim about your topic. Your paper supports your claim through research, argument, logic, example, analysis, etc.
- All the paragraphs in your essay must relate to your thesis statement in some way. Therefore, eliminate or refocus any paragraphs or sentences that do not address your thesis statement.