

## Tips on Writing a Thesis Statement (Gustavus Writing Center)

### What is a Thesis Statement?

The thesis statement is the sentence that states the main idea of a writing assignment and helps control the ideas within the paper. It is not merely a topic. It often reflects an opinion or judgment that a writer has made about a reading or personal experience. For instance: Tocqueville believed that the domestic role most women held in America was the role that gave them the most power, an idea that many would hotly dispute today.

### What Makes a Strong Thesis Statement?

- A strong thesis statement gives *direction* to the paper and limits what you need to write about. It also functions to inform your readers of what you will discuss in the body of the paper. All paragraphs of the essay should explain, support, or argue with your thesis.
- A strong thesis statement requires *proof*; it is not merely a statement of fact. You should support your thesis statement with detailed supporting evidence will interest your readers and motivate them to continue reading the paper.
- Sometimes it is useful to mention your supporting points in your thesis. An example of this: "John Updike's *Trust Me* is a valuable novel for a college syllabus because it allows the reader to become familiar with his writing and provides themes that are easily connected to other works." In the body of your paper, you could write a paragraph or two about each supporting idea. If you write a thesis statement like this it will often help you to keep control of your ideas.

### Where Does the Thesis Statement Go?

A good practice is to put the thesis statement at the end of your introduction so you can use it to lead into the body of your paper. This allows you, as the writer, to lead up to the thesis statement instead of diving directly into the topic. If you place the thesis statement at the beginning, your reader may forget or be confused about the main idea by the time he/she reaches the end of the introduction. Remember, a good introduction conceptualizes and anticipates the thesis statement.

### Tips for Writing/Drafting Thesis Statements

- *Know the topic.* The topic should be something you know or can learn about. It is difficult to write a thesis statement, let alone a paper, on a topic that you know nothing about. Reflecting on personal experience and/or researching will help you know more information about your topic.
- *Limit your topic.* Based on what you know and the required length of your final paper, limit your topic to a specific area. A broad scope will generally require a longer paper, while a narrow scope will be sufficiently proven by a shorter paper.
- *Brainstorm.* If you are having trouble beginning your paper or writing your thesis, take a piece of paper and write down everything that comes to mind about your topic. Did

you discover any new ideas or connections? Can you separate any of the things you jotted down into categories? Do you notice any themes? Think about using ideas generated during this process to shape your thesis statement and your paper.

## **Constructing a Strong Thesis Statement – Links**

<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/thesis/>

<https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/how-to-write-a-thesis-statement.html>