

**Thesis Development**  
**What's your thesis?**  
**(a.k.a. What's your point? Your argument? Your assertion?)**

**Definition of a Thesis:**

The foundation for an academic paper that is alive with good critical thinking skills is its thesis. The term, thesis, comes from the Greek word for putting or position. A thesis statement then is your position or argument about a subject. It is your promise or “cue” to the reader about what you are going to say in your paper.

Another way to think of a thesis: Your mom asks if you'd like to go to the store with her. You decide to go and hop in the car. Then along the way she stops at the bank, the cleaners, and the gas station. You complain because you thought you were only going to the store. She replies, “We are. I just thought while we were out, I'd go ahead and make these other stops.”

When you write, your “thesis” is your promise to your readers that you will take them where you said you would—with no unscheduled stops or irrelevant arguments thrown in along the way.

**What a Thesis Statement Should NOT Be**

**Remember, these are strong suggestions, but there may be times you are asked to create a thesis that deviates from these ‘rules.’**

1. **Thesis statements should not be more than one sentence long.**
2. **Thesis statements should not be questions.**
3. **Thesis statements should not state mere facts.**  
**Example:** Television Commercials attempt to sell their products to the largest possible audience.
4. **Thesis statements should not be too broad.**  
**Example:** Several tactics are used to entice consumers to buy the advertised product. (This thesis is likely to produce an essay that is simply a shopping list of examples, dull both for the writer and reader.)
5. **Thesis statements should not be too narrow.**  
**Example:** Budweiser beer commercials are offensive.
6. **Thesis statements should not be announcements of what you will do.**  
**Example:** In this essay, I will show why advertisements work.
7. **Thesis statements should not simply state a topic.**  
**Example:** How advertisements manipulate their audience.  
Broccoli.

<http://library.stitch.edu/OWL/essayTips/thesis.html>  
<http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/EssayThesisStatement.html>  
<http://www.english.upenn.edu/Grad/Teachweb/scthesis.html>

## So what *should* Thesis Statements Be? \*What are the qualities of a good thesis statement?

- Identifies a limited, specific subject
- Focuses on a particular aspect or direction
- Is stated in a clear, direct sentence
- Can be supported with facts and details
- Meets the requirements of the assignment
- Is usually placed at the end of the introductory paragraph
- Does not contain personal pronouns (Ex. I, me, you, etc.)
- Avoids vague words such as "good," "interesting," "a serious problem," "in many ways," etc.

NOTE: A thesis statement should not be a well-known fact (Ex. Bats are nocturnal mammals.).

### \*A Helpful Tip? What is the formula for a good thesis statement?

A specific subject + a particular stand, feeling, or feature = an effective thesis.

**Examples:** Subject: aerobics

Stand/Feeling: is an ideal way to lower blood pressure, lose weight, and release tension.

Thesis: Aerobics is an ideal way to lower blood pressure, lose weight, and release tension.

Subject: suicide

Stand/Feeling: is affecting our youth today, and unless there is more awareness and prevention, suicide will continue to take the lives of our youth.

Thesis: Suicide is affecting our youth today, and unless there is more awareness and prevention, suicide will continue to take the lives of our youth.

### \*What if I do not know what my thesis statement should be?

It is alright to begin work on an essay with a tentative thesis statement in mind. If you do not have a clear, focused idea for a thesis, try re-reading your assignment and doing some research on your subject. This should help you go from a tentative thesis like "The theme of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is revealed in many ways" to a more focused one which might be "The theme of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is revealed through plot, character, and setting."

### \*What if my thesis statement does not fit my essay?

Before you submit your essay to your instructor, make sure you discuss some aspect of your topic as it is stated in your thesis in every paragraph. If this is not the case, you must either revise your thesis to fit your essay or revise your essay to fit your thesis. NOTE: Before submitting your essay, make sure your thesis statement fulfills the requirements of the assignment.