

What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is a one- or two-sentence condensation of the argument or analysis that is to follow; basically, it states your stance on an issue. It organizes and develops the argument to provide the reader with a guide to the argument. Good thesis statements are clear, specific, and define a certain perspective on an issue or problem. They may also propose a solution or course of action, often stating that some action "should" or "should not" take place.

How do I tell a strong thesis from a weak thesis?

- A strong thesis takes a stand on the subject...a weak thesis uses vague language that does not clearly state the writer's conclusion on the topic.
- A strong thesis justifies discussion...a weak thesis does not indicate why we should care.

Poor Thesis Statement #1: "There is an attendance policy for composition courses at UCF."

This simply states a fact, rather than a stance on an issue.

Poor Thesis Statement #2: "The attendance policy for composition courses at UCF is fantastic."

This implies a stance towards an issue, but the word "fantastic" is not specific.

Better Thesis Statement: "The attendance policy for composition courses at UCF should be continued because it encourages student responsibility, discourages procrastination, and contributes to academic success."

This statement takes a clear stance, with specific reasons. It also offers a plan of action: the policy should be continued.

How do I generate a thesis statement if the topic is assigned?

If you are assigned a broad topic on which to write your essay, your first task is to choose a more limited topic within that broader field. Next, focus on an issue related to this specific topic. The issue should be something that can be argued; that is, there should be some disagreement about solutions to the problem. Your stance on this issue will be your thesis statement.

Example...

- **Broad Topic:** Professional Sports
- **More Specific Topic:** Artificial Turf in Professional Football
- **Issue Related to the Specific Topic:** Is artificial turf an unnecessarily dangerous playing surface?

- **Thesis statement:** "Artificial turf should be banned as a playing surface in the NFL, because of the variety of injury risks it poses to players."

How do I generate a thesis statement if the topic is not assigned?

Your first task is to consider a topic that is interesting, relevant, and related to the assignment. The UWC has a list of research and argument ideas that can help you find a topic. Next, follow the process outlined above to come to a specific thesis statement. Remember that a good thesis statement should do the following:

- Take on a stance with which some reasonable people could disagree
- Deal with a subject that can be adequately treated given the nature of the assignment (do not choose an issue that is too large to handle)
- Express one main idea
- Assert your conclusions about the subject

I'm still stuck. How can I start?

1. Brainstorm the topic: what topics interest you? What do you care about? What issues or forces affect your life? The best topics for writing are those we find personally interesting.
2. Narrow the topic: Abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, gun control—these broad areas may be too large for argument in a typical argument essay. Be sure to limit your argument to one specific area that you can handle.
3. Take a position on the topic: this is vital! A thesis statement is your informed stance on an issue.
4. Use specific language: be clear and concise. Be careful not to over-generalize with thesis statements; qualifiers help limit your argument and make it more reasonable.

Over-generalized: All rave clubs in Orlando should be closed because they are centers of drug activity.

Qualified statement: Rave clubs in Orlando that cannot show adequate protection against illegal activity, including drug-dealing, should be closed.