

CREATING A WORKING THESIS STATEMENT

Every piece of writing requires a central idea and a demonstrated path from point A to point B. To stay on topic and give your writing a direction, you must develop a thesis. Thesis statements clarify the main idea/point/argument of your piece. Typically the final sentence(s) of your introduction, the thesis, generally informs the audience of the “argument” or intent of your piece. A good thesis statement should be specific and clearly outline your specific claim.

Developing a Working Thesis:

- We develop our working thesis by answering “so what?” A working thesis is generally the rough draft version of your thesis and often changes or develops further as you research and write. However, beginning with a working thesis gives your writing a direction to follow, as everything else in your piece should tie back to and support your thesis
- You should be aware that, sometimes, your thesis will change as you write, and that’s normal. Writing is a tool for exploration, and the experience is dynamic. If you decide to alter your course, adjust your thesis to reflect that change.
- Use the space below to practice writing working thesis statements:

Qualities of a Good Working Thesis:

A good thesis:

- Clearly states the writer’s defined opinion
- Conveys a singular focus
- Appeals to readers of the subject’s audience
- Is focused and narrowed
- Is clear and utilizes terminology appropriately
- Is easily found

Writing an Arguable Thesis:

- A general comment about a topic is **not** a thesis statement. Your thesis statement must make an argument. The kind of argument depends on the subject (history, English, etc.), but in every subject, you must do more than make a general statement: you must make an *arguable* statement.
 - Not Arguable:
 - Teachers face many challenges.
 - In 1362, the English parliament passed a statute mandating the use of English in law courts.

- o Arguable:
 - Two major challenges faced by today’s teachers include reduced funding and invasive federal policy on education.
 - The English parliament’s ratification in 1362 of a statute mandating the use of English in law courts was a pivotal moment in the fourteenth century trend toward Anglicization in the face of continual cultural and military conflict with France during the Hundred Years’ War.
- The “Not Arguable” statements are too general or too widely agreed upon to be good arguments. No one would argue that teachers do not face any challenges; nor would anyone argue that a widely-acknowledged historical event did not happen. The argument lies in the interpretation. The “Arguable” examples go beyond general statements to make claims about the significance of the topic.

Writing an Organized Thesis:

- A well-written thesis should be organized in a logical order. For example, in a problem/solution paper, it is logical to establish that there is a problem before you propose a solution to it, so the thesis should reflect that logical structure.
 - o Poor Organization: Smoking should be outlawed because it kills people.
 - o Better Organization: Smoking is a serious problem because it harms the health of both smokers and nonsmokers; however, a viable two-part solution to the dangerous problem of smoking is to increase the tax on cigarettes and ban smoking in public places.
- The previous example of “Poor Organization” inverts the logical order of the paper: it puts the proposed solution before the problem, and it is not specific about either the problem or the solution. The example of “Better Organization” above provides a logical sequence and breaks down the argument into parts. As readers, we can anticipate how the paper’s argument will be arranged.
 - o The Problem of Smoking
 - negative health effects on smokers
 - negative health effects on nonsmokers
 - o Solutions to the Problem of Smoking
 - increasing taxes on cigarettes
 - banning smoking in public places

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