

Generating and Revising Thesis Statements (page 1 of 2)

College writing, regardless of academic subject, usually requires you to demonstrate your ability to make an argument and to persuade an audience. A thesis statement tells your reader what the point (or argument) of your paper is. It may seem overwhelming to create an argument of your own from scratch, but we do this everyday, not just in academic writing. "The bus is a quicker way to campus than the subway" is one example of an arguable claim that you may come across everyday. You try to persuade your friends—about a better movie or a tastier restaurant. For each of these arguments, you would give reasons, or evidence, to show why your argument is better. You might say "The sequel *Jurassic World* is more engaging than the original *Jurassic Park* because of its improved special effects and velociraptors, even though some people prefer the old script." This is a good example of a thesis because it provides a **CASE**:

- C) **Conflict**—why might people disagree?
- A) **Argument**—what is the point you're making?
- S) **Setting**—what is the context of this argument?
- E) **Evidence**—what types of evidence support your argument?

To brainstorm and form a thesis, ask what your **CASE** should be for this paper:

Conflict:

- How is my claim different from what others argue?
- How can I address opposing argument(s) in order to strengthen my thesis?

Argument:

- What is the goal of my paper?
- What do I want the reader to understand about my argument on this issue/topic?
- Does my thesis address the prompt?
- Is my wording precise?

Setting:

- Does my thesis say enough about the context and exact topic to successfully convey my assertion?
 - "Calcium availability has a greater effect on health than potassium availability." is not contextualized. Is the context human health? Plant health? Animal health?
- Is my thesis as specific as possible?
 - "The similarities between the two poems are very interesting." is not direct or specific.
- How can I address an opposing argument in order to strengthen my thesis? What is and is not within the scope of my argument?
 - "Crime has been an issue since the dawn of time." is too broad for one paper.
- Is my thesis an arguable claim?
 - "This paper will concern marriage." is not an arguable claim about marriage.

Evidence:

- How can I convince my reader that my claim is true/accurate?
- What types of evidence must I provide in order to support my argument?

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Sample thesis statements:

- Sick patients who trust their primary care doctors and take medicine as prescribed heal 25% faster than patients who take prescribed medicine and do not trust their doctors.
- Though some people wanted to resist the South-African government through violence, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu showed that non-violent resistance could bring victory.
- Both Andrew Marvel in "To His Coy Mistress" and John Donne in "The Flea" attempt to woo unwilling women; however, Marvel uses traditional poetic elements such as couplets, allusions, and hyperbole whereas Donne uses religious imagery and jarring metaphorical conceit.
- Though some businesses maintain a large profit margin despite having unhappy employees, happy employees consistently have a higher production rate than unhappy employees.

Practice your own:

Connecting Your Thesis with Your Paper	Connecting Your Paper with Your Thesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be aware of your thesis as it emerges:</i> Sometimes you may not discover your full thesis or main claim until <i>after</i> you draft your paper. Be open to writing a preliminary thesis/hypothesis and to revising on an ongoing basis, even though this means more work. • <i>Be flexible:</i> Your thesis is not set in stone. Your argument may change or develop after you gather more evidence or as you revise your paper. Be sure to rethink and revise your thesis if your argument shifts. • <i>Thesis as a paragraph:</i> A thesis which begins a lengthy paper might need to be part of a full thesis-paragraph, one which informs about, for instance, any subclaims, relationships among variables, or limitations on conditions in which the main thesis applies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thesis as a preview:</i> A thesis gives a preview for your paper that lets your readers know what to expect and helps you as a writer stay focused on your CASE. • <i>Thesis as a roadmap:</i> You can use your CASE/thesis as a roadmap by breaking down your thesis into parts and then organizing your paper to support each part with evidence and explanations. • <i>Stay on topic:</i> The rest of your paper should support and provide evidence for each part of the claim articulated in your thesis. If a paragraph does not do this, then cut it.