

A Working Thesis Statement

As you explore and narrow your topic through prewriting activities, you should come very close to a preliminary idea of exactly what it is you want to say or argue about your topic/issue. The position you take on your topic/issue may shift slightly as you progress in your writing, but to continue towards a final draft of your paper, you need to have what is called a “working thesis”—a thesis statement that you are using to draft your paper, but one that may potentially change as you discover more about your topic and what you have to say about it.

Remember, in general, a good thesis statement...

- ❑ takes a definite stand on the issue.
- ❑ justifies discussion of the issue.
- ❑ expresses one main idea.
- ❑ makes a very specific statement.
- ❑ makes assertions about your conclusions on the subject.
- ❑ is something that reasonable people could disagree with or take issue with.
- ❑ brings focus to the entire paper.
- ❑ makes a promise to the reader about the scope, purpose, and direction of your paper.
- ❑ is focused and specific enough to be "proven" within the boundaries of your paper.
- ❑ is generally located near the end of the introduction; sometimes, in a long paper, the thesis will be expressed in several sentences or in an entire paragraph.
- ❑ identifies the relationship between the pieces of evidence that you are using to support your argument

For the writer, the thesis statement...

- ❑ serves as a planning tool.
- ❑ helps the writer determine the paper's real focus and clarify the relationship between ideas.
- ❑ becomes a hook on which the writer can "hang" the sub-theses or the topic sentences that present evidence in support of the argument.
- ❑ anticipates questions about the topic and provides the unifying thread between pieces of information.

For the reader, the thesis statement...

- ❑ serves as a "map" to follow through the paper.
- ❑ prepares the reader to read.
- ❑ keeps the reader focused on the argument
- ❑ helps the reader spot the main ideas.
- ❑ engages the reader in the argument.
- ❑ offers enough detail for your reader to grasp your argument.