

## *Thesis Statements*

### **What do I write about?**

If you have a strong, focused purpose, you're well on your way to a solid thesis statement (the foundation of all essays).

- A **purpose** for your essay is a general idea of what you will write about.
- A **thesis**, on the other hand, is *your stance* on the topic—a one or two sentence statement of opinion, or something that you will explore, prove, expand upon, develop and provide a through discussion of in your essay. Remember, a thesis must be *arguable*.

Since there could be many different thesis statements for the same purpose, your thesis will depend on what you see as the main point of your essay. Your audience does not have to agree with your point; your job is to use your evidence—stories, observations, facts and so on—to make your point credible.

**NOTE: You might not be able to formulate a solid thesis until after you've done a rough draft.**

### **What is a thesis statement?**

A thesis statement is the basic point or main idea of the whole essay. A thesis is often an assertion that you argue or support in the essay. But in less argumentative papers, it can simply forecast the territory your essay **will** cover. Having a thesis is useful to both the writer and the reader.

If you have problems with your thesis, try to follow these two conventions: a thesis statement is often (but not always) one sentence, and it is often placed at the end of an introductory paragraph.

### **What are they good for?**

- A thesis helps you narrow down your more general topic, and find your own angle on the topic. Essentially, thesis statements help you express *your own opinion*.
- A thesis is a reader strategy in that it lets the reader know what to expect or look for in the essay.
- A well-formed thesis is a writer strategy in that it helps you develop and cover all parts of an assignment, and keeps you organized, helping you determine if you are wandering off in too many unrelated directions.

### **Where do I get one?**

Successful writers start with a tentative thesis or simply write until they find a thesis. A lot of great thesis statements end up at the *end* of an early draft. The writer can then polish his/her thesis and move it to the introduction of the next draft.

Once you have a sense of the point you want to make, try summing up your point as concisely as you can in a sentence or two. Then go on to write another draft in which you try to stick to and fully develop that thesis statement. Through subsequent drafts, as you continue to develop and refine your ideas, keep coming back to and reconsidering your tentative thesis statement. Often times, writers need to continually reevaluate and revise their tentative theses as the paper's main point becomes clearer to them.

**NOTE: Don't get frustrated trying to write the "perfect" thesis statement as the first step in your writing process. This will almost never happen.**

### **Things to keep in mind . . .**

- A thesis statement should not be so broad that you could write an entire book on the topic, unless, of course, you do intend to write a book:  
*Television has affected our society.*
- A thesis statement should not be so narrow that you could not write an in-depth essay on the topic:  
*During a recent episode of Sex in the City, Carrie fell madly in love with a pair of \$400 designer shoes and bought them on the spot.*
- A thesis statement does more than state a well-known fact; it makes an arguable assertion that you must prove to your reader. Read the following statement:

*Sarah Jessica Parker, the star of Sex in the City, portrays a single writer living in Manhattan with a sever shoe obsession.*

Reading this thesis, the reader might say, "So what? I already know this." In order for the above sentence to be a thesis statement, I must write something that needs further explanation, something that I can argue and support with specific evidence from the television show, something like this:

*Portraying a woman in charge of both her career and her sexuality, Sarah Jessica Parker (Carrie on Six in the City) presents a woman who takes full advantage of the gains made by the women's movement.*