

Developing Your Thesis Statement

A thesis statement can be one of the greatest unifying forces in an essay. A good thesis holds together the various parts of a paper by presenting your particular interest in the subject and pointing towards the paper's development. Often a thesis statement will be expressed in a sentence or two at the end of the introduction and will act as a map of the essay to come; the thesis tells the reader both where you are going and why you want to go there.

Writing to Find Your Thesis

By the time you reach the final draft of your essay, you should have a strong, robust thesis statement that will be a powerful guide to your reader. However, the process of writing itself is often how you find and develop your thesis statement. While engaging with your subject, you will discover new points and your position may change. Your thesis statement might therefore become both longer and more complex. Remember that this means you are making a larger promise to your reader and in order to fulfill that promise, you may have to write more: as your thesis grows, so does the length and depth of your essay.

For example, look at the three stages of the thesis statement below and see how it develops. How strong and interesting are the thesis statements? Ask yourself what the writer would have to do to prove each of them.

1. Sexuality plays an important role in both Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine*, and Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning*.
2. In both Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine*, and Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning* sexuality plays an important role because it is an essential part of forming anyone's identity.
3. In both Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine*, and Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning* sexuality plays an important role because it is an essential part of forming a person's identity. However, in order for the personalities in both of these works to find their identities and sexualities, they had first to recognize themselves as consumers.

Reevaluating Your Thesis

After you have written the first draft of your essay, ask yourself whether you have fulfilled your promise to the reader. You may find that the content of your essay does not match your original thesis statement. If this is the case, you will need to alter your thesis to match the content of your essay. You may have to refine your thesis in order to accurately tell the reader where you are going.

Thesis Statement Worksheet # 1

Below is a list of strong thesis statements. While they are all different, they share certain traits such as specificity and clarity.

1. Compared to the 1970s, eating disorders have reached epidemic proportions among adolescents today.
2. Unless the University administration enforces a strong anti-hazing policy in both fraternities and sororities, the wellbeing of many of its students will be endangered.
3. A young woman in the Middle Ages had few options for marriage, freedom, and personal privacy.

All three of these thesis statements would lead to very different types of essays. Can you outline how you would approach writing an essay based on one of these thesis statements? What evidence would you need to prove your thesis? Remember that as you think through your topic, your thesis may develop further.

Thesis:

First Section:

Second Section:

Third Section:

Thesis Statement Worksheet # 2

Below is a list of strong thesis statements. While they are all different, they share certain traits such as specificity and clarity.

1. While technology in the movie industry has really progressed in the last 10 years, these developments have not resulted in better films.
2. Through playing violent video games, such as Grand Theft Auto, teenagers are learning to behave like criminals.
3. The legalization of medical marijuana would lead to an increase in drug use and criminal activity in America.

All three of these thesis statements would lead to very different types of essays. Can you outline how you would approach writing an essay based on one of these thesis statements? What evidence would you need to prove your thesis? Remember that as you think through your topic, your thesis may develop further.

Thesis:

First Section:

Second Section:

Third Section:

Thesis Statement Worksheet # 3

Below is a list of strong thesis statements. While they are all different, they share certain traits such as specificity and clarity.

1. An increase in the tuition of the C.U.N.Y. schools will result in a lower rate of both enrollment and retention of current students.
2. It is critical that college students be exposed to a variety of disciplines in their freshmen year, but they should be allowed the freedom to focus their studies on a particular discipline by their sophomore year.
3. The S.A.T. test is based on cultural assumptions that make it invalid in judging a person's true academic ability.

All three of these thesis statements would lead to very different types of essays. Can you outline how you would approach writing an essay based on one of these thesis statements? What evidence would you need to prove your thesis? Remember that as you think through your topic, your thesis may develop further.

Thesis:

First Section:

Second Section:

Third Section:
