**Essay Writing: Thesis Statements**

**What’s a thesis and why do I need one?**

* A **thesis** is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself.   
  🡺The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
* A thesis makes a claim that others might dispute.
* A thesis also helps your reader to follow your train of thought.

**How do I write a thesis?**

* Don’t attempt writing your thesis statement until you have explored your topic through brainstorming and/or research. You can’t take a position until you’ve done your research!
* You can write a thesis using these steps:   
   1. Select a topic.;   
   2. Take a position on the issue or ask an interesting question.;   
   3. Briefly state your reasons why/how.; and   
   4. Revise: take out any wordiness or vague ideas, and make sure the thesis relates  
   to the topic.

**Example of brainstorming a thesis:**  
Select a topic: television violence and children  
Ask an interesting question: What are the effects of television violence on children?  
Revise the question into a thesis: Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in preschool children.

**Remember** this argument is your “preliminary” or “working” thesis. As you read you may discover evidence that may affect your stance. It is okay to revise your thesis!

**Example from 12th Night:**

Selected topic: Character analysis

Ask a question: What does (insert character’s name here)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_add to the story in terms of plot, development of other characters, humour, suspense, theme, etc?

Revise the question into a thesis:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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**What does a good thesis look like?**

* A good thesis statement must be unified, precise and dynamic.
* It also has to be something you can support with evidence, and be limited enough to cover adequately in the number of words allowed for the paper.   
  **Examples:** *1.* ***dull, vague*** Grass is important in the African Savanna.   
   2. ***precise, dynamic*** Grass is the essential element in the African savanna’s system of nutrient   
   recycling.

**Examples:** 1.***cannot be proven, unmanageable***

Attitudes about love vary.

2. ***manageable, supportable***In *Frankenstein,* Mary Shelley discusses Romantic attitudes about the   
 relationship between physical beauty and love.

**Tips**

1. A thesis statement is not written in stone. Don’t get so attached to a thesis that you refuse to change it as your ideas change and develop.

3. Avoid announcements unless asked for by your teacher e.g. *This paper will discuss….*

4. Avoid statements that are obvious e.g. *Cancer treatments are hard on patients.*

**Now, let's play: Is it a good thesis?**

1. I would like to become a chef when I finish school.

2. Both chefs and cooks can prepare fine meals, chefs differ from cooks in education, professional commitment, and artistry.

3. At first water rafting experience can challenge your body and spirit and transform an adolescent into an adult.

4. Men are chauvinists.  
   
5. Our American family structure encourages men to repress their true feelings, leaving  
 them open to physical, psychological, and relationship difficulties.

6. Steroid abuse is bad.   
   
7. Hip hop is the best thing that has happened to music in twenty years.  
   
8. Many people object to today's violent horror movies.