

What is a Thesis Statement

The **thesis statement** is that sentence or two in your introduction that:

- tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion (opinion)
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper (subject).
- directly answers the question asked of you. 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.
- makes a claim that others might dispute (arguable – not a fact)
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph (not the first sentence) that presents your argument. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

How Do I Get a Thesis?

A thesis is the result of a lengthy thinking process. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment. Before you develop an argument on any topic, you have to collect and organize evidence.

- What is your opinion or your authentic reaction to the prompt?
- Is there evidence available to support this claim.

How Do I Know if My Thesis is Strong?

Ask yourself:

- *Do I answer the question?* Re-reading the prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
- *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?* If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- Is my thesis statement specific enough?