

## Writing (or Revising) a Thesis Statement

### I. Pre-Writing

- A. Read your assignment and underline each of the key words or phrases about or related to the topic of the assignment.** These could be people, places, things, or ideas. Write something about each one. Work quickly, spilling out everything you know about that person, place, thing, or idea.

**Re-read your assignment and underline or highlight the “task” words**, which are directions like *analyze*, *describe*, *define*, and *compare*. Be sure that you read the whole assignment; teachers often use more than one task word, and you’ll want to be sure to address them all.

- B. Ask yourself, are there any class materials (readings, handouts, class notes, activities, discussions) that relate to this topic? If so, which materials, and how do they relate?** For example:

Class material 1:

This class activity we did relates to the topic because \_\_\_\_\_.

Class material 2:

These class notes or handouts relate to the topic because \_\_\_\_\_.

**If your paper is supposed to be based on one or more readings, review those texts.** You don’t need to re-read everything from beginning to end, but you will need to be able to summarize the authors’ main ideas or arguments or identify specific parts of the text you want to use in your paper. Try using these sample sentences to articulate the authors’ ideas or important content from the text(s):

Primary source material:

The author of this book writes \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_.

The author of this article argues \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

This text suggests \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

- C. Decide what additional research you might need to do in order to learn more about the topic.** Look through the CGCC Library’s print and online resources or visit the Reference Desk for more help finding credible academic sources and review each source. Again, you don’t need to read everything from beginning to end, but you will need to be able to summarize the authors’ main ideas or arguments or identify specific parts of the text you want to use in your paper. Try using these sample sentences to articulate the authors’ ideas:

Secondary source material:

The author writes \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_.

The author argues \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

**D. Imagine that your topic is the subject of a conversation among several people: you, the author(s) of your text(s), and an average, intelligent person (your reader).** What does each of these participants say or assume about this topic? Whose analyses, descriptions, or opinions are similar to yours, and whose are different?

**E. Explain what is important or significant about your particular contribution to this conversation.** Why is it important for your readers to consider what you have to say? What would happen if your position were widely read and accepted? What would happen if it weren't? Try using these sample sentences to articulate your answers:

Most people think/assume \_\_\_\_\_ about [my subject], but [another author] states \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. My position is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

[One author] states \_\_\_\_\_ about [my subject], but [another author] writes \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. My position is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

## II. Writing your Thesis Statement

**A. In one or two sentences, summarize the main thing that you want to say about your topic in your paper.** Try using some of the following sentences to get started:

I want to persuade my readers that \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*.  

Thesis

I want to explain to my readers that \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*.  

Thesis

I want to compare \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ to show my readers that  
 \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*.  

Thesis

I want to describe/analyze \_\_\_\_\_ to show/persuade my readers that  
 \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*.  

Thesis

### **Examples:**

I want to persuade my readers that children should not be allowed to vote.

I want to describe the love scenes in Romeo and Juliet to show my readers that Shakespeare had an ironic sense of humor.

I want to compare Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's music to Biggie Small's music to show that music with a message is still relevant.

**B.** Keep in mind that the type of thesis you write will depend on your reason for writing (what you are trying to accomplish). However, **a good thesis statement often says something that you believe but with which others might disagree. Often, a thesis should state more than a fact.**

**Example**

In today's society, children are not allowed to vote.  
Children should not be allowed to vote.

*Factual statement* (Informs)  
*Position statement* (Persuades)

**C. Write your thesis statement so that it explains why you think what you think.** Take the kernel of your thesis (the part between the asterisks) and add a clause beginning with "because."

**Example:**

*Thesis* - Children should not be allowed to vote.

*Better Thesis* - Children should not be allowed to vote because they are not mature enough to handle the responsibility of voting.

**D. Review what you wrote in exercise IIB.** Then try to write your thesis so that it shows how your thesis agrees or disagrees with other people's opinions on this topic.

**Example:**

*Better Thesis* - Children should not be allowed to vote because they are not mature enough to handle the responsibility of voting.

*Best Thesis* - Although Vita Wallace argues forcefully for children's rights, children shouldn't be allowed to vote because they are not mature enough to handle the responsibility of voting.