

CRAFTING A THESIS STATEMENT

WHAT IS IT?

A thesis statement concisely expresses the argument an essay makes and indicates to readers what the writer knows about the topic. Particularly in shorter essays, the thesis statement is often one sentence placed at the end of the introduction; the body of the essay then provides evidence to prove that thesis. *Remember that your thesis is not the same thing as your topic; your thesis is an argument about your topic.*

CREATING A THESIS

A good thesis is the result of a lengthy process involving brainstorming, critical reading, [usually] researching, and revising. You cannot determine your final stance on a topic until you have reflected on the available evidence.

1. Consider your topic carefully. Do not choose a topic just because you think it will be easy to research or write a lot about it. What really interests you? What relates to the class? What fits your assignment instructions?
2. Narrow your topic by determining a question you want to answer about it. What issues/ideas are debated about this topic? What questions do you have? What do you want to know more about? What is your connection to the topic? Ask yourself *who, what, when, where, and why* questions to stimulate your thinking: What happened to the dinosaurs? When did it happen? Who were their predators? Where did they live? Why did they become extinct?
3. Determine a tentative claim stating an argument about your chosen aspect of the topic. This is your *working thesis*. As you continue to develop or research evidence to support your working thesis, consider how new information affects it. Your thesis statement will likely change throughout your writing process; never be afraid to adjust it!

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE THESIS

AN EFFECTIVE THESIS STATES A *DEBATABLE* CLAIM THAT CAN BE SUPPORTED WITH EVIDENCE.

A thesis statement is *not* a fact; it takes a position about a fact – a position that not everyone will support.

Fact: *Dinosaurs became extinct millions of years ago.*

Thesis: *Based on geological and paleontological evidence, a giant meteor striking the earth probably caused the extinction of dinosaurs.*

AN EFFECTIVE THESIS IS NEITHER TOO BROAD NOR TOO NARROW.

To strike a balance between broad and narrow, you must be as specific as possible while also ensuring you will be able to find sufficient evidence to support your claim. Consider the length of your paper: a two-page paper needs a much more specific thesis than a longer paper.

Too Broad: *Dinosaurs became extinct for many complex reasons.*

This thesis provides little direction for the argument to follow, which makes it too broad. Will the writer discuss the dinosaurs' process of becoming extinct? All of the reasons? Some of the reasons? How much of this claim can reasonably be covered in a single paper?

Too Narrow: *The Tyrannosaurus Rex became extinct because its tiny arms limited its ability to hunt the small dinosaurs increasingly common in its environment.*

This thesis provides such specific information that the writer may find little to expand upon in the paper other than simply repeating information included in the thesis statement.

Balanced: *Dinosaurs became extinct because they were unable to adapt to their changing environment.*

This thesis explains what the argument will be (why dinosaurs went extinct) without going into so much detail that the paper's main points have already been shared. It is not so broad that the writer must spend pages setting up the argument.

Remember that your thesis can change as you write. "Check" your thesis often to make sure that its wording accurately reflects the points you are making in each paragraph as well as in your introduction and conclusion.

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THE KSU WRITING CENTER: NOT BECAUSE YOU CAN'T WRITE... BECAUSE YOU DO.