



Writing a Thesis

WHAT IS A THESIS?

"An effective thesis statement is a central idea that conveys your purpose, or reason for writing, and that requires support" (Hacker and Sommers 7).

WHEN WRITING...

An effective thesis should:

- State a position that needs to be explained and supported
- Use concrete language
- Be appropriate for the length requirements of the assignment, not too broad or too narrow

"Whether your thesis is an answer to a question you have asked or a resolution of a problem you have identified, it should be a sharply focused statement that announces your position or a debatable topic" (Hacker and Sommers 7).

CREATING A WORKING THESIS

As you are brainstorming for your writing assignment, you will need to start narrowing down your ideas to decide on your focus. You might consider answering the prompt with a detailed response to create a working thesis statement.

- For Example: Do you think student loan debt should be cancelled?
- Working Thesis: Student loan debt should/should not be cancelled.

You can then check your statement against the criteria for an effective thesis. Does it state a position? Can you support that position? Does it use specific/concrete language? Is it an appropriate length?

If you can answer yes to all these questions, you have an effective working thesis that is ready for revision.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVISION

Five Common Problems with Thesis Statements:

1. The thesis statement is a fact.
 - a. Solution: Enter the debate by taking a stance.
2. The thesis statement is a question.
 - a. Solution: Take a position and answer your own question
3. The thesis is too broad.
 - a. Solution: Focus on a subtopic. (Education > College > College Athletes)
4. The thesis is too narrow.
 - a. Solution: Widen your focus to a topic that has multiple possible positions.
5. The thesis is too vague.
 - a. Solution: Focus your thesis with concrete language and clues about where the essay is headed

As your ideas develop, your thesis will likely change, becoming more focused and specific. Your thesis might also change if your position changes based on the evidence you find, so don't be worried about revising your thesis as you go.