Thesis Statement Development

A *thesis statement* sums up the main idea of an entire piece of writing. The following is a basic strategy to develop a strong thesis statement.

Begin with your topic.
What about the topic is interesting to you? Take a moment to consider your response to the topic and what you want your writing to focus on. Sometimes it's easier to write about something that you're passionate about.

Write a general thesis statement to guide your first draft.
For example, "I'm interested in _____." This is the time to make connections and write freely about any thoughts or questions you may have about your topic. Don't worry about using formal language, and try to avoid editing as you go—just write.

Refine your thesis after you've written a first draft.
Take a break, go for a walk, have a snack, then come back to your draft: What is the main idea you discuss? Your thesis may need to become more specific to reflect this. For example, if your topic is dogs and you primarily focused on the stigma associated with the pit bull breed, your thesis might be, "Even though many people don't like pit bulls, they make great pets."

Use research to support your thesis.
Research can help you make additional connections in your paper. You can change your thesis from an "I" statement to a more formal one such as "Due to stigmas associated with aggression, pit bulls and other bull terrier breeds are the highest populated breeds at animal shelters despite their ability to make for a kind and loving pet."

Examples

Topic: Benefits of social media

First draft: Social media is fun, and it lets me talk to my friends who live out of town.
Second draft: Social media is beneficial and fun because it helps people stay connected with others who they may otherwise not be able to talk to.
Third draft: Social media platforms benefit society due to their ability to recreate an in-person experience and foster relationships that would otherwise end due to distance barriers through games, video chats, and photo sharing.

Topic: Cats vs. dogs as pets

First draft: I think dogs are better than cats because my dog cuddles with me but my cat scratches me.
Second draft: Dogs are better pets than cats because dogs often show affection, whereas cats do not.
Third draft: Dogs have a strong inclination to show affection which has positive psychological effects on the human brain, ultimately making them better pets than cats.

Topic: Commuting to work

First draft: Going to school on a bike instead of in a car is fun, cheap, and good for the environment.
Second draft: Biking to school instead of driving provides physical benefits, saves money, and is better for the environment than cars.
Third draft: Commuting by bike instead of by car promotes a healthy lifestyle, saves money, and minimizes negative effects on the environment.