

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.

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.”

Thesis statement examples →

Examples

Topic: Electronic devices in college classrooms

First draft: Studies show how the use of cell phones in class reduce a student's ability to comprehend and retain information.

Second draft: The consistent use of personal electronic devices in class inhibits a college student's focus, reduces comprehension of course material, and may affect ability to complete the course.

Explanation: The first draft is a statement to be backed up by research. The second draft is more focused and offers specific points that will be discussed in the essay.

Topic: Singular pronouns

First draft: Commonly used as plural pronouns, the words "they" and "them" have actually been used as singular pronouns for hundreds of years.

Second draft: Considering that "they" and "them" have been used as singular pronouns since the 14th century, pushback around this particular usage, under the pretense of standard English grammatical rules, is rooted in gender dynamics.

Explanation: The first draft states information without an argument. The second draft of the thesis statement introduces an argument that can be challenged and accompanied by research.

Topic: Barack and Michelle Obama in the media

First draft: Former President and First Lady Barack Obama and Michelle Obama used photography to reveal life within the White House. They did this in order to show people what life was like in the White House so they could build trust with the American people.

Second draft: Barack and Michelle Obama are unlike previous presidential families in that they intentionally worked to garner the trust of the American people by showcasing their human nature through various media platforms during and after their administration.

Explanation: The first draft contains an argument but has multiple sentences with repeated ideas. The second draft condenses the thesis into one sentence that can be argued and also hints at what information readers can expect from the essay.