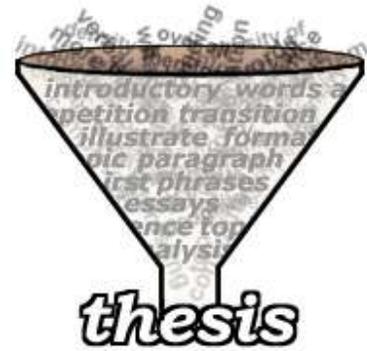


Tips for Developing Your Thesis Statement

A **thesis statement** is a sentence (sometimes more than one sentence) that reveals your message's main point. Since your thesis statement offers readers a preview of and direction for your paper, it is usually placed toward the beginning of the essay. However, you might choose to delay your thesis statement until later if you need to first build your reasoning in the reader's mind or you want to narrate the process by which you have arrived at your thesis.



Are you ready to write your thesis statement?

Your thesis should be developed from research, not just an idea. So you will want to read what's been said on your topic so you can respond to it. Writing scholar John C. Bean (2011) describes the process this way:

... Few scholars report starting an article by choosing a topic and then narrowing it. Rather, academic writers report being drawn into a conversation about a question that does not yet seem resolved. The writer-to-be finds this conversation somehow unsatisfactory; something is missing, wrongheaded, unexplained, or otherwise puzzling. Similarly, having focused on a problem, only rarely does a skilled academic writer write a thesis statement and outline before embarking on extensive exploration, conversation, correspondence with colleagues, and even, on some occasions, writing one or more drafts. A thesis statement often marks a moment of discovery and clarification—an “aha!” experience (“So *this* is my point! Here is my argument in a nutshell!”) rather than a formulaic planning device at the very start of the process. (33–34)

What problems or questions within your topic area interest you most? Some initial research may help you find some. If it's useful, try freewriting a response to something you find. Remember to keep an open mind through the process and be willing to revise your thesis as you learn more about your topic.

What does a thesis statement look like?

When all is done, your thesis statement needs to encapsulate your entire main idea. This can make a thesis statement seem difficult to write. However, if you can use your research to answer the following four questions (Hedengren, pp. 39–40), you can build a strong thesis statement.

Question	Example answer
1. What is your topic?	U.S. culpability for not bombing and destroying the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz
2. What is your stance? (Be sure to state this as a complete sentence.)	The United States could not have effectively targeted and destroyed Auschwitz directly
3. Why do you believe this? (State your reasons in a <i>because</i> clause.)	<i>Because the United States lacked the technological precision and intelligence necessary to destroy the camp's death houses without also destroying many or most of the Jewish captives</i>
4. Why would someone disagree with this? (State the opposition in an <i>although</i> clause.)	<u>Although the United states possessed sufficient firepower and information to attack Auschwitz's industrial sector</u>

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When you have your answers, try grouping them into one statement (Although.... + **stance** + *because...*):

Although the United States possessed sufficient firepower and information to attack Auschwitz's industrial sector, the U.S. could not have effectively targeted and destroyed Auschwitz directly because we lacked the technological precision and intelligence necessary to destroy the camp's death houses without also destroying many or most of the Jewish captives.

Then you can revise or reorder the elements of the statement to meet your needs.



References

- Bean, J.C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hedengren, B. F. (2004). *A TA's guide to teaching writing in all disciplines*. New York: Bedford/St.Martin's.

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