

# The Thesis Statement: A Guide for Self-Editing

What is its purpose?

## **For the *writer*, the thesis statement:**

- Serves as a planning tool, and therefore, should be *revised!* Revising this sentence after you write your paper will create a much better and more thought out product. *Your thesis should be revised to fit your evidence, not the other way around.*
- Helps the writer determine the essay's real focus.
- Becomes a "hook" on which the writer can "hang" the topic sentences that present evidence in support of the thesis.
- The thesis answers the question that your paper poses.

## **For the *reader*, the thesis statement:**

- Serves as a "map" to guide the reader through the paper.
- Prepares the reader to read.
- Keeps the reader focused on the main idea.

## **Basic Questions:**

- Is your thesis statement a one (or possibly two) sentence statement that outlines the purpose of your paper?
- Is your thesis statement placed in a conspicuous, easily found place- usually the last sentence of the introduction?
- Is your thesis statement relevant to the prompt assigned by your professor?
- Is your thesis a statement, and not a question or quotation?
- Is your thesis statement an assertion that a person could disagree with? (This ensures that it is something that can be proven, and not a statement of fact or observation.)
- Does your thesis statement answer "how" or "why?" (does it take a side on an issue?)
- Is your thesis statement direct and concise?

### **Advanced Questions:**

- \_\_\_ After rereading your paper, does your thesis statement accurately depict your paper? If not, it is better to *revise* your thesis statement to portray your argument.
- \_\_\_ Does the structure of your thesis statement parallel the overall organization of your paper?
- \_\_\_ Does your thesis statement honestly present the argument, or make the claim, that you are covering in your paper?
- \_\_\_ Is your thesis statement supported by the evidence in the rest of your paper?
- \_\_\_ Is your thesis statement specific to your paper, covering only what you discuss in your paper?
- \_\_\_ Does your thesis statement involve all of the main points in your argument?
- \_\_\_ Does your thesis statement coherently combine all aspects of your paper?

### **Revising your thesis:**

Return to your thesis and examine

- a) what it doesn't say, and
- b) what it needs to say.

Remember that, as you write, you are bound to come up with new ideas and observations that you'd like to incorporate into your paper. Every time you make a new discovery, your thesis sentence will have to be revised. Sometimes you'll find that you're stuck in your writing. You may need to return to your thesis. Perhaps you haven't clearly defined an important term or condition in your thesis? Maybe that's why you find yourself unable to progress beyond a certain point in your argument?

*For thesis examples and more information,  
please visit: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/  
general/gl\\_thesis.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_thesis.html)*