

EBSCO Publishing Student Success Tools  
How to Write a Thesis Statement  
*Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis.*  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

A thesis statement is a sentence stating the specific idea or opinion you address in a paper or essay, and is usually located at the end of the first paragraph. It gives focus to your writing, answers questions your paper may evoke, and reflects your clear analysis of a subject, which are elements your reader requires.

The role of a thesis statement is to support your research; consequently it develops after you have conducted your research, not before. Writing a thesis before research weakens your paper's foundations.

Is every thesis a statement of fact? No. Your opinion and views on a subject are very much infused into the thesis. For example, an English assignment asking if Prospero is a sympathetic character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can inspire different student statements.

Generally, there are three thesis statement classifications: poor, working, and strong. A poor thesis is vague, or is difficult to prove, because it is unsupported or unrelated to the subject of your paper. Not recommended. A working thesis statement is like a draft, a work in progress, and ready for further clarification. Getting warmer. A strong thesis statement grabs the reader's attention, and shows your clear views on a subject, backed by research and textual evidence. This is where you want to be!

Therefore, a strong thesis statement requires a command of your collected research or notes before crafting a thesis statement. You can move from research to a working thesis by outlining the main ideas that work together, thus focusing your thoughts. Create a list of related words or phrases from your research, or write your opinions and observations of a subject. This will help you connect ideas in a unique way, and perhaps reveal an idea you hadn't considered before, all essential tasks you should perform before you set down your thesis and fashion the body of your paper.

Sources and other good articles on how to construct a thesis statement:

Online Writing Lab's (OWL) Guide to Writing a Thesis Statement:  
[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_thesis.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_thesis.html)

The Writing Center and University of North Carolina (UNC) Guide to Thesis Statements:  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html>

The Nuts and Bolts to College Writing: The Beginning:  
<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/beginning.html>