

Compose a draft thesis statement

If you are writing a paper that will have an argumentative thesis and are having trouble getting started, the techniques in the table below may help you develop a temporary or "working" thesis statement.

Purpose statement

Begin with a purpose statement that you will later turn into a thesis statement.

Assignment: Discuss the history of the Reform Party and explain its influence on the 1990 presidential and Congressional election.

Purpose Statement: This paper briefly sketches the history of the grassroots, conservative, Perot-led Reform Party and analyzes how it influenced the economic and social ideologies of the two mainstream parties.

Question-to-Assertion

If your assignment asks a specific question(s), turn the question(s) into an assertion and give reasons why it is true or reasons for your opinion.

Assignment: What do Aylmer and Rappaccini have to be proud of? Why aren't they satisfied with these things? How does pride, as demonstrated in "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," lead to unexpected problems?

Beginning thesis statement: Alymer and Rappaccini are proud of their great knowledge; however, they are also very greedy and are driven to use their knowledge to alter some aspect of nature as a test of their ability. Evil results when they try to "play God."

Main idea

Write a sentence that summarizes the main idea of the essay you plan to write.

Main idea: The reason some toys succeed in the market is that they appeal to the consumers' sense of the ridiculous and their basic desire to laugh at themselves.

List ideas

Make a list of the ideas that you want to include; consider the ideas and try to group them.

1. nature = peaceful
2. war matériel = violent (competes with 1?)
3. need for time and space to mourn the dead
4. war is inescapable (competes with 3?)

Formula

Use a formula to arrive at a working thesis statement (you will revise this later).

- Although most readers of _____ have argued that _____, closer examination shows that _____.
- _____ Uses _____ and _____ to prove that _____.
- Phenomenon x is a result of the combination of _____, _____, and _____.

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What to keep in mind as you draft an initial thesis statement

Beginning statements obtained through the methods illustrated above can serve as a framework for planning or drafting your paper, but remember they're not yet the specific, argumentative thesis you want for the final version of your paper. In fact, in its first stages, a thesis statement usually is ill-formed or rough and serves only as a planning tool.

As you write, you may discover evidence that does not fit your temporary or "working" thesis. Or you may reach deeper insights about your topic as you do more research, and you will find that your thesis statement has to be more complicated to match the evidence that you want to use.

You must be willing to reject or omit some evidence in order to keep your paper cohesive and your reader focused. Or you may have to revise your thesis to match the evidence and insights that you want to discuss. **Read your draft carefully, noting the conclusions you have drawn and the major ideas which support or prove those conclusions. These will be the elements of your final thesis statement.**

Sometimes you will not be able to identify these elements in your early drafts, but as you consider how your argument is developing and how your evidence supports your main idea, ask yourself, "**What is the main point that I want to prove/discuss?**" and "**How will I convince the reader that this is true?**" When you can answer these questions, then you can begin to refine the thesis statement.