

The following handout was adapted from a resource written by **Erin Karper** for the Purdue OWL web site. See the following weblink to find the original text:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>

Creating a Thesis Statement

A strong and unifying thesis is one of the most important parts of academic writing.

Writing a Good Thesis Statement

First Step:

The first thing you should do is determine what kind of paper you are writing. There are three types of papers you will be asked to write in academic settings, and these three types correspond to the three types of songs mentioned above.

- An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.
- An **expository** (explanatory) paper explains something to the audience.
- An **argumentative** paper makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.

Some texts, such as narratives or poetry, do not fall under these categories; however, these types of writing often contain a thesis statement somewhere in the text. Often, such as statement is only hinted at or inferred by the author. The major theme of a novel is an example of an implied thesis statement within a narrative.

Second Step:

After determining the type of writing you will be doing and adjusting your thesis statement to accommodate this type of writing, you need to ensure that your thesis statement is specific. In other words, it should offer a unifying and/or summative statement of what you will discuss in your paper and should be supported with specific evidence.

Third Step:

You also need to make sure that readers can find your thesis in an expected location. An author's thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper.

This convention is important because it helps researchers skim through articles and other writings (as you will do when you are attempting to find relevant sources for your proposal and eventually for your argumentative research paper) in order to determine if the source is significant to their topic and will benefit them in their research work.

Fourth Step:

Finally, it is very important that you realize that, as you research and as you write, your topic may change. This phenomenon occurs frequently because as you research, you become more informed and create better arguments based on what you know about the topic. Thus, your topic – or at least your view on the topic – may change over the course of conducting research and writing about your chosen topic. When this happens, it is crucial that you adjust or revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper. This is why we refer to your thesis in your proposal as a “working thesis.” A working thesis implies that your claim is not set in stone and is likely to change over the course of your project.

Thesis Statement Examples

Example of an analytical thesis statement:

An analysis of the college admission process reveals one challenge facing counselors: accepting students with high test scores or students with strong extracurricular backgrounds.

The paper that follows should:

- explain the analysis of the college admission process
- explain the challenge facing admissions counselors

Example of an expository (explanatory) thesis statement:

The life of the typical college student is characterized by time spent studying, attending class, and socializing with peers.

The paper that follows should:

- explain how students spend their time studying, attending class, and socializing with peers

Example of an argumentative thesis statement:

High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.

The paper that follows should:

- present an argument and give evidence to support the claim that students should pursue community projects before entering college