Writing a Thesis Statement

WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?
- One complete sentence that expresses your position.
- Narrows the topic down to a specific focus of investigation.
- Establishes a direction for the entire paper.
- Points toward the conclusion.
- Always stated in your introduction (usually at the end of the first paragraph).
- Always takes a stand and justifies further discussion.

WHAT IS NOT A THESIS STATEMENT?
- A thesis is never a question.
- A thesis is not a statement of purpose.
- A thesis is not simply a topic.
- A thesis statement never overtly says, “In this paper, I will . . .”
- A thesis statement is not a statement of fact.

A THESIS STATEMENT IS NOT A STATEMENT OF A FACT
Your readers—especially your instructors—want to read writing that engages them. Consequently, you must write thesis statements that are arguable, not factual. Statements of fact are easy to write about simply because they are easy to prove. After all, they’re facts. However, you cannot write engaging papers around statements of fact. Such theses prevent you from demonstrating critical thinking and analytical skills, which you want to show your instructor. If you were to write a paper around the next two statements, your writing would probably be quite dull because you would be restating facts that the general public already knows.

Statement of fact: Small cars get better fuel mileage than 4x4 pickup trucks.
Statement of fact: Foul language is common in movies.

THESIS STATEMENTS ALWAYS TAKE A STAND AND JUSTIFY FURTHER DISCUSSION
In order to make your writing interesting, you should develop a thesis statement that is arguable. Sometimes you will be writing to persuade others to see things your way and other times you will simply be giving your strong opinion and laying out your case for it.

Look at the following two examples:
Statement of fact: Small cars get better fuel mileage than 4x4 pickup trucks.
Arguable thesis statement: The government should ban 4x4 pickup trucks except for work-related use.

Statement of fact: Foul language is common in movies.
Arguable thesis statement: The amount of foul language in movies is disproportionate to the amount of foul language in real life.
### HOW DO I CHANGE MY TOPIC INTO AN ARGUABLE THESIS?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is my narrower topic?
2. How do I feel about it?
3. What is important about it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Topic</th>
<th>Narrower Topic</th>
<th>How do I feel about this topic? Why is this topic important?</th>
<th>Thesis Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>health care</td>
<td>Publicly funded health care</td>
<td>The US should provide health care for all children, because this would save society a lot of money in the long run.</td>
<td>The US should provide health care for all children under the age of six, in order to save money because it will ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prisons</td>
<td>treatment of inmates with mental illnesses</td>
<td>We should provide mental health services in all prisons. Prisons are dangerous enough without the added risk.</td>
<td>The US should provide comprehensive mental health services in all its prisons, because the number of mentally ill prisoners is disproportionate to the number of persons suffering from mental illness in the general population and providing these services would make our prisons safer.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### NOW YOU TRY...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>education</th>
<th>The Pledge of Allegiance</th>
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