



WRITING CENTER

(614) 688-4291 • www.cstw.osu.edu

Developing a Thesis Statement

A thesis is a short statement that suggests an *argument or your perspective* on your paper's focus. A thesis should also be *significant or interesting* and be *manageable* for the assignment or the paper you are writing. Your thesis should reflect your specific contribution to your reader's understanding of the topic at hand. It should also contain a claim about the topic that you can explain and justify.

However, a thesis can have different purposes dependent on both the topic and discipline at hand. It may be used to categorize or define, persuade or convince, demonstrate cause-effect or correlation, reveal a resemblance or parallel between cases, evaluate or critically examine, propose or create new policies, and address ethical issues.

There are several ways to create a thesis:

- Generate a list of questions about the topic. Pick the question that interests you most and answer it.
- Look at aspects of the topic that you do not fully understand and examine the causes of the difficulty or confusion.
- Free-write. Write down random thoughts on the topic as they come into your head until you come up with an interesting avenue of investigation.
- Try to move from the general to the specific. The more specific the thesis, the better.

Examples of moving from a topic to a thesis:

Topic: The novel, *Heart of Darkness*.

Vague Generalization: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* describes the beginnings of European commerce in Africa.

Question: What does the novel suggest about the relations between Europe and Africa?

General Concept: The novel represents a symbolic journey that reveals how Europeans imagined a civilizing mission to Africa, but actually savagely exploited the Africans.

Specific Thesis: The narrator's account of the self-restraint exercised by the cannibals reveals that ultimately the most seemingly savage of Africans are more moral than the supposedly civilized Europeans.

Topic: The environment

Vague Generalization: The use of gasoline pollutes the air.

Question: What alternatives are available to the use of gasoline?

General Concept: The development of solar-powered or electric engines would reduce the use of gasoline and improve air quality.

Specific Thesis: The vast amounts of money used to protect American sources of oil in the Middle East should be used instead to develop the technology necessary to replace gas-powered vehicles.