THESIS STATEMENTS

How-to guide for writing effective thesis statements
ELEMENTS

What a thesis statement is
What a thesis statement is not
ELEMENTS

- **Controlling Thought**
  - What is my topic? (have I been given a prompt or am I to choose my own topic?)
  - How do I feel about the topic? What is important about it?

- **Thesis Statement**
  - Combines the two components of a controlling thought into a concise sentence
• It is a complete sentence that expresses your position on a given topic (a point you want to argue or support in an essay)

• It narrows down your topic to a specific focus of investigation

• It establishes a direction for the entire paper, especially if it consists of sub-parts

• It points forward to the conclusion

• It is most often stated in your introductory paragraph
STRONG THESIS STATEMENTS ARE:

[disputable]
- Not obvious
- Some readers will disagree

[focused]
- Not too broad
- Your position is clear

[relevant]
- Not boring
- Readers won’t say “so what?”
**COMPONENTS TO INCLUDE IN THESIS**

- **WHAT** – claim about the topic or expressed opinion regarding a topic

- **HOW** – the events, ideas, sources, etc…that you choose to prove your claim (the “road map”)

- **WHY** – the significance of your idea, in terms of understanding your position as a whole (answers the dreaded question, “So what?”)

Example:

In both its geography and its brutality, the U.S. Civil War remains vastly different from other conflicts experienced by Americans in the past three centuries; specifically, the widespread impact of the war on the citizenry, the economy and the landscape proves that the importance of the Civil War lies as much on the home front as it does on the battlefield.
STRONG THESIS STATEMENTS

- Take a stand
- Justify a discussion
- Express one main idea
- Are specific
TAKE A STAND — DON’T PLAY ALL SIDES

- Consider:
  There are some negative and positive aspects to Banana Herb tea supplements.

- Versus:
  Because Banana Herb tea supplements promote rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, they pose a potential danger to customers and should not be used.
Consider:
My family is an extended family.

Versus:
While most American families would view consanguineous marriages as a threat to the nuclear family structure, many Iranian families believe that these marriages help reinforce kinship ties in an extended family.
Consider:
Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the Internet, and web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.

Versus:
Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.
ARE SPECIFIC

- Consider:
  World hunger has many causes and effects.

- Versus:
  Hunger persists in Appalachia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.
WHAT IT ISN'T

- It is never a question; it could be the answer to a question

- It is not a statement of purpose

- It is not simply a topic (it is the paper’s main topic coupled with the writer’s opinion regarding that topic)
WHAT TO AVOID

- Personal pronouns (I, you, we)
- Uncertainty qualifiers (might, maybe, perhaps)
- Extremism (everything, all, none, always, never)
- Vague formulations (some, kind of, somewhat)
- Attempting two topics at once (even if they seem related).
  
  Pick one and stick with it.

- Just stating a fact (a thesis clearly communicates your opinion regarding a topic)
7 COMMON MISTAKES IN THESIS STATEMENTS

- TS is only a declaration of the topic (Failed marriages)
- TS is worded as a question (Can men and women be just friends?)
- TS is obvious (Overeating is bad for your health)
- TS is wishy-washy (Sometimes men and women can be friends and sometimes they can’t)
- TS is too wordy (keep it to a single sentence, around 25 words)
- TS makes vows (“I am going to discuss…”, “In this paper I will analyze…”, “The purpose of my paper is…”)
- TS is a random list (Argument 1; argument 2; argument 3)
- **Declaration of topic:**
  
  *Weak:* Nursing as a demanding profession.
  
  *Strong:* Effective nursing requires lifelong education, self-discipline and strong professional ethics.

- **Questions:**
  
  *Weak:* Is study during sleep possible?
  
  *Strong:* Recent studies have revealed that people learn during sleep and are able to subconsciously modify their behavior after they wake up.

- **Obvious:**
  
  *Weak:* The internet can be addictive.
  
  *Strong:* Recent research shows that the unpredictable way in which useful emails arrive can make checking for them addictive.
- **Being wishy-washy:**

  **Weak:** Sometimes students enjoy their studies, but sometimes they don’t.

  **Strong:** There is a direct relationship between students’ attitudes towards study and their learning outcomes.

- **Too wordy:**

  **Weak:** I am going to discuss the importance of reducing the sugar consumption in American elementary school children who consume nine times the recommended daily amount of sugar because of the prevalence of soda machines and unhealthy snacks in the school canteens. (41 words)

  **Strong:** Sugar consumption of American elementary school children should be reduced by controlling the menus of school canteens and raising children’s awareness of healthy diets. (26 words)
- **Making vows:**
  
  **Weak:** I am going to write about the movie Titanic.

  **Strong:** The 1997 movie Titanic was a huge success because of the talents of the leading actors, the film’s director and the original genre of the script, “a romantic disaster.”

- **Random list:**

  **Weak:** This paper will discuss Titanic, James Cameron and Leonardo DiCaprio.

  **Strong:** The 1997 movie Titanic was a huge success because of the talents of the leading actors, the film’s director and the original genre of the script, “a romantic disaster.”
content and examples adapted from these sources

http://www.slideshare.net/CustomWriting/easiest-way-to-write-a-thesis-statement
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