

Finding a Thesis

Purpose: The thesis of a paper is the crux of it; it's the carefully formulated opinion of the writer that he/she supports with evidence from different texts. Because a thesis is an essential element of any paper, this handout will describe multiple ways to construct a thesis.

Tips for Finding a Thesis

By Jenny, David A, and Brandon

1) Read and Understand the Assignment

- a) Ask the professor if the instructions are unclear
- b) Restate the question in your own words

2) Brainstorm

- a) Free write
- b) Make clusters and diagrams
- c) Make outlines and lists
- d) Discuss ideas with someone else/ bounce ideas off of a friend
- e) Pick up a newspaper or magazine (maybe something will jump out at you)
- f) Ask questions (who, what, when, where, why, how?)

3) Choose a Topic

- a) Decide which idea you want to do your paper on.

4) Evaluate your topic

- a) Does the thesis fit the assignment (see step 1)
- b) Is it appropriate for the audience?
- c) Is it interesting?
- d) Will you be able to find enough information?
- e) Is it too broad or narrow?
- f) What is the purpose or point of your thesis?

5) Put it into words

Write a possible thesis; it should tell what you will be writing about, why you're writing about it, and how it answers the questions asked in the assignment (without explicitly saying "In this paper I will be discussing...").

Organization of Thesis

The thesis of a paper is generally stated as the very last sentence in the introduction of a paper and normally specifies the main points of the thesis and the order in which the points are going to be presented in the paper.

Example: Trees are important to the environment because they **provide oxygen, create shelter for many creatures, and are aesthetically pleasing.**

The **controlling idea** of a thesis statement indicates the direction of the paper and, often, the writing strategy used to support the thesis. A controlling idea expresses the writer's attitude and approach toward a topic. In this thesis statement, the idea that trees **are important** is the controlling idea.

Because of the way the thesis is written, the body paragraphs would be organized as such:

Body Paragraph 1: Trees are an important source of oxygen for the environment.

Body Paragraph 2: Trees also provide shelter for an incredible amount of creatures.

Body Paragraph 3: Although trees have crucial functions in the environment, an often-overlooked feature of trees is that they are beautiful to look at.