



Thesis Recognition and Formulation

Thesis Recognition: All essays have theses. **The thesis of an essay is its primary assertion or argument.** When reading any essay, ask yourself: “What is the main point this author is trying to get across?” The answer to this question is the author’s thesis. It is usually found clearly stated in the essay’s introduction; traditionally it is the last sentence.

Thesis Formulation: During the process of your research, you will formulate the answer to your leading question. A one-sentence version of this answer will be your thesis statement. Your thesis statement plays a pivotal role in your essay. All of the information you discuss must relate clearly back to your thesis statement. In fact, **the entire purpose of your essay is to explain and support your thesis.** By determining a clear thesis statement, you will give focus to your essay and make your argument clear for your reader.

Three Characteristics of a Good Thesis:

- 1) **Specific Subject:** Avoid broad topics. Narrow your discussion to specific items, people, or situations.

Too Broad: Women’s Liberation

Revised: The impact of the Women’s Labor Union in Chicago from 1969-1977

- 2) **Clarity:** Avoid vague assertions by defining generic words such as important, interesting, influence, difficult, society, media, good, bad, we...

Unclear: Our thoughts are influenced by the media.

Revised: The number of commercials an average American is exposed to on a daily basis contributes to frivolous consumerism.

- 3) **Originality:** Don’t simply state your topic or a fact. Present an original, specific argument that demonstrates your angle on the subject.

Unoriginal: The rain forest is an important resource.

Revised: The destruction of the rain forest and the thousands of unidentified species within it will delay the cure for cancer.

Note: Have pride in your ideas. Don’t second-guess your statements by using “perhaps,” “probably,” or “seems like.” Remember, the first word in “authority” is “author” and you are the authority in your writing.

Sample Thesis Statements: Only one of the following theses statements fulfills the three characteristics of a good thesis sentence. The rest of the statements need to be revised.



1. Racism has become institutionalized in American society.
2. My thesis is that although Timber wolves are timid, they are being systematically exterminated.
3. America in the 1950's went through a tremendously audacious change in its physiological understanding of media corporatism, that related to the assassination of several important figures, as well as a genuine shift in capital investments in working class neighborhoods, buying power, and postwar recovery.
4. Exploring visual art enhances the understanding of a culture.
5. The caves of Lascaux, France were painted by Paleolithic hippies high on mushrooms.
6. In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. states that one hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, "the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination."
7. The current version of the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional because it violates the separation between church and state.
8. The use of narcotics by Olympic athletes is shameful.
9. I will discuss the relationship between parent child physical closeness and criminal behavior as an adult
10. Does the belief in destiny influence an individual's future?