



Thesis Statements

The thesis statement is the central argument clearly stated early in an essay. **Refining the thesis** means **to be sure your argument is focused and on topic so that your writing stays organized** and you get to the most important question to answer.

Where is this thing going?

When writing an essay, it is easy to get lost. There are a million different ways to lose track of an idea. Perhaps it just fades over time. Or the research takes you in an entirely new direction. Or we get distracted. Or lack the will to really investigate it fully. But, of all the things to be sure you get right, having a clear thesis can guide your work to the level of clarity that will lead to good marks.

The thesis statement, in almost any essay, should be a sentence in the first or second paragraph, which clearly states the main argument. *This essay will discuss the implications of brain consumption during a zombie apocalypse as a metaphor for communism.* Choose the verb carefully. Are you *arguing*? *Describing*? *Discussing*? *In this essay I will analyze the importance of properly refining a thesis for academic texts by examining drinking habits of early writers.*

How to do it

This is where our guide gets a little abstract. See, interrogating the thesis to be sure it's just how you want it is tricky. You have to think really critically about what you want to say and how to express that through evidence from other writers. For some of us that means a really frustrating cloud of confusion we are trying to wrestle into shape. Take a walk. Talk to someone. Read more. Sleep. Eat. Play football. Drive in circles. Paint a picture. Do whatever it takes to get your idea into one clear sentence that you can support. That's the ballgame, as they say.

Tips

- Write the thesis statement as clearly and simply as possible
- Write the thesis at the top of your outlines
- Connect your later paragraphs with the thesis in some way to keep your reader focused
- Check in with the thesis by asking, "Is this really what I am doing? Is this really what I want to discuss?" Just like voting: do it early; do it often.
- If some of your essay doesn't support the thesis in some clearly stated way, cut it out.

Remember, almost every single piece of academic writing (from both students and professors) will have an argument to make. So what's yours?