

## Crafting Thesis Statements

A **thesis statement** is a concise statement that articulates your central argument. In academic writing, your thesis statement will depend on the *genre* of writing you are doing (argumentative writing, expository writing, or analytical writing). A thesis statement focuses on the specific argument of the paper and gives your reader an idea of how that argument will unfold.

### Features of an effective thesis statement:

- Specific and concise
- Suggests the essay's direction, scope, and emphasis
- Makes a claim that is arguable (i.e. not a statement of fact)
- Establishes the essay's significance
- Appears at the end of the introduction

**\*\*A working thesis statement** is an essential step in crafting your paper. It allows you to begin your research, but gives you space to modify and refine your thesis as your own research and knowledge develops or changes. Be prepared to modify—if not, sometimes, throw out—a thesis statement as you read and learn more about your topic.\*\*

### Approaches for Writing a Thesis Statement:

- **Making a factual claim:** “Although scholars have done this, they have not done...”
- **Making a claim of value:** “Scholars have looked at X, but they have not considered Y. I will focus on Y because this area is not examined closely in the field.”
- **Making a claim for common ground:** Pointing out mutual points of agreement between what others have found and what *you* think—and then advancing *your own point in the argument* in order to find a solution to a problem that others (may) find acceptable.

### CSC Method

Stands for CONTEXT, SUBJECT, CLAIM

- **CONTEXT** – the area of discussion
- **SUBJECT** – the focus of the paper
- **CLAIM** – tells the reader what argument regarding the subject the paper will make
  - Ex. The most flagrant abuse of animal rights today ironically takes place in U.S. laboratories dedicated to the preservation of human life.

### WHAT-HOW-WHY Structure:

- **WHAT** (specific argument you will make in this paper)
- **HOW** (the methods or tools/sources/pieces of evidence you will use to prove your argument; this is also the “map” of your essay)
- **WHY** (the significance of your argument to your overall topic; So What? of the essay)

**Thesis Statement Starter Sentences:** Use these to craft a *working thesis statement*. These should be further refined as you write your paper and should not appear in the same structure in your final paper.

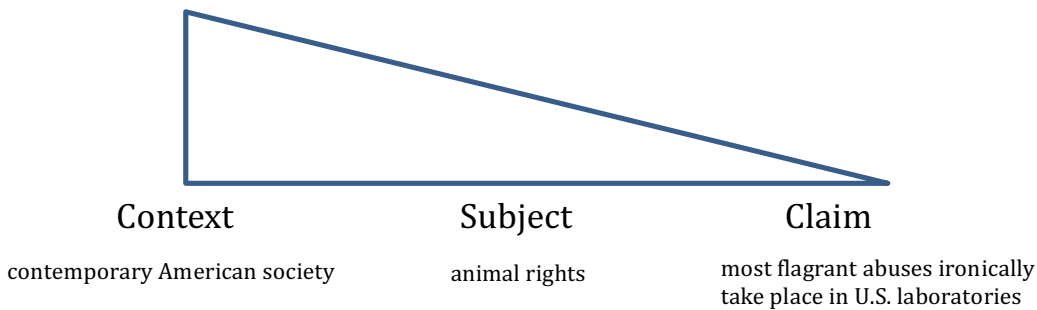
- To write your **WHAT**: “In this essay, I will argue ...”
- To write your **HOW**: “I will argue this by/through ...”
- To write your **WHY**: “The significance of this argument is ...”

## Workshop Activities:

### Identify the CSC in the following thesis statements:

- For the music industry today, copyright laws should be set aside in favor of free Internet distribution.
- Nintendo's video game *James Bond* encourages the breakdown of family values.
- Consulting is trying, dynamic and requires more than just logic; the ability to artfully perceive, eloquently present and empathically listen are necessary traits of a good consultant.

Ex. The most flagrant abuse of *animal rights* today ironically takes place in **U.S.** laboratories dedicated to the preservation of human life.



### Identify the What-How-Why structure in this thesis statement:

In this short paper, I would like to propose the need to contextualize the effect of anxiety. To say more especially, I argue that the effect of emotional responses perceived as anxiety are contingent of the other factors, certainty of threat from the stimuli on the one hand, and perceived competence of the people to deal with the threats on the other hand. In the next section I begin this article with the brief description of the discussion between the groups of the political psychologists advocating and criticizing the Affective Intelligence Theory by Marcus and his colleagues, and try to figure out how they reached to contradicting results. Their discussion offers the important starting point to develop the theory of the effect of emotion over information behavior further.

“Effect of Anxiety to Citizens: Does Anxiety Facilitate or Deteriorate Citizens' Motivation and Capacity to Political Information and Activity?” (Third-year graduate student in Political Science; NNS, L1: Japanese)

### Evaluating Thesis Statements:

- Several new cable television programs are made to appeal to “tweens,” or 8- to 12-year olds, a demographic group that is courted by marketers.
- The breeding of domestic cats with wild cats should be outlawed.
- The most important lesson of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that racial equality will be the secret to world peace.

## The Sheridan Baker Thesis Machine

Follow these steps to turn a topic idea into a working thesis for your paper.

**Step 1:** State the **topic** under consideration.

Examples: (a) cats, (b) writing classes, (c) grades

**Step 2:** State the specific **issue** in the form of a debating proposition.

- (a) Resolved: Cats should be subject to leash laws.
- (b) Resolved: Writing classes should be abolished.
- (c) Resolved: Grades are unnecessary in college.

**Step 3:** Using a *because* clause, convert the resolution into a sentence that states your **position** on the issue and provides a main **rationale** for that position [= rough thesis].

- (a) Cats should be subject to least laws because they are inveterate wanderers.
- (b) Writing classes should not be abolished because many students are unpracticed writers.
- (c) Grades are unnecessary in college because students learn more rapidly without them.

**Step 4:** Polish and refine the rough thesis by adding **qualifications** (using an *although* clause) and removing the because clause [= thesis].

- (a) Although it is against a cat's instinctive wanderlust to be restrained, the crowded nature of city life demands that cats not be allowed to roam around freely.
- (b) Although gifted high school graduates should be exempt from writing classes, most entering students need help in attaining college-level writing skills.
- (c) Although there may be a legitimate need to evaluate the work of college students, the traditional grading system hinders learning and stifles creativity.

**Step 5:** **Test** your faith in the thesis and explore potential counterarguments by **reversing** your position.

- (a) The cat's independent and adaptable nature makes it the only pet capable of living an unrestricted existence within the city.
- (b) Although introductory writing classes may have remedial value for some students, most high school graduates possess writing skills sufficient for success in college course.
- (c) Traditional grading procedures may offend educational purists, but public school systems require pragmatic approaches to evaluation.

\* Adapted from Sheridan Baker, *The Practical Stylist*