



TCS Writing Centre

Thesis Statements

A **thesis** is the central idea of an argument. A **thesis statement** communicates a thesis as clearly and concisely as possible in one or two well organized and clearly written sentences. Seems simple, doesn't it? Well, many people find generating a thesis and turning it into a good thesis statement quite challenging. This tip sheet offers a step-by-step approach to creating strong thesis statements.



Step 1: Carefully reflect on what you've learned about the particular topic you're going to write about, make sure you thoroughly understand what your assignment is asking you to do, and do some initial mind-mapping work to see and clarify for yourself what you're thinking about your topic.

Step 2: Building off of the groundwork you did in Step 1, ask yourself the following question: **What specific argumentative point do I want readers to take away from my essay?** In other words, if readers take away just one thing from your essay, what do you want that thing to be? The answer to this question is your thesis.

Step 3: Take your answer to the question you asked yourself in Step 2 and write it out as a clear and complete sentence. Start your sentence with its subject (who or what the sentence is about), then move immediately to its main verb (what the subject is or does), and then complete the idea. For example, here is a thesis that is expressed using this type of sentence form: *The Merchant of Venice* [subject] is [verb] antisemitic at its core [completion of the idea].

Step 4: Take the working thesis you've created in Step 3 and ask yourself the following question: **Why do I think this is true?** Try to come up with at least four good reasons for why you think your thesis is true.

Step 5: Carefully scrutinize the reasons you've come up with in Step 4 and select the ones that best support your thesis. Try to have at least three good reasons. These are your supporting arguments.

Step 6: Provide a concise overview of your supporting arguments either before or after your thesis. The result will be your thesis statement. For example:

While some are still tempted to take elements of the play as a critique of religious intolerance, we cannot forget or push aside the fact that *The Merchant of Venice* is antisemitic at its core [thesis]. This is made perfectly clear in how Shylock's hatred of Antonio is rooted in negative stereotypes of Jews, how Shylock's famous "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech is immediately undercut by his inherent inhumanity, and how the complete humiliation and ruin of Shylock not only saves Antonio the Christian but also materially benefits the Christian city of Venice [overview of supporting arguments].

Thesis Statement Worksheet

Question 1: What specific argumentative point do I want readers to take away from my essay? If readers take away just one thing from my essay, what do I want that thing to be?

Answer to Question 1 in the form of a clear and complete sentence:

subject (who or what)	verb (what the subject is or does)
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complete the idea

Why do I think the above is true?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Finally, carefully scrutinize the reasons you've listed above and select the ones that best support your thesis. Provide a concise overview of your supporting arguments either before or after the thesis you've created above. The result will be your thesis statement.
