Thesis Statements Study Sheet

Goals for this Study Sheet

A thesis statement is the backbone of any academic paper you write. Because of this, it is imperative that you get this small part of your paper as good as you can get it. This study sheet will teach you what a thesis statement is, how a thesis statement works, and how to develop a strong thesis.

The Basics

Within your academic writing career you will be asked to persuade or argue interesting and/or logical ideas which support your view on a subject. Persuasion is a skill that you currently practice in your everyday life. Perhaps you persuade a parent to pay your cell phone bill. You may persuade your professor to give you an extension on an assignment. Maybe you persuade a friend to eat at your favorite restaurant. In college, your assignments often ask you to make a persuasive case or argument in writing. You will be asked to convince your reader of your point of view. At the collegiate level, this is frequently called an academic argument. Within the argument you state your point of view on the topic in one or two sentences. The sentence or sentences are called your thesis statement, and serve as a summary of the argument you will make in your paper.

What is a Thesis Statement?

- The thesis statement is the sentence or sentences that state the main idea of a writing assignment and help to control the ideas within the paper or essay.
- A thesis statement is often (but not always) one to two sentences and is most often placed in the introductory paragraph.
- A thesis statement is not merely a topic.
- A thesis statement is an arguable assertion that can be proven with evidence and opinions.
It often reflects an opinion or judgment that a writer has made about a reading or personal experience.

How Do I Create a Thesis?

- Read over your essay assignment sheet.
- Collect and organize evidence.
- Look for relationships between facts (similarities and differences).
- Think about the significance between the relationships.
- After doing this, a main idea should present itself. This idea is your “working thesis.”

What Makes a Strong Thesis?

After reviewing your working thesis ask yourself the following:

- Do I answer the question or prompt?
- Do I use I or we?
- Have I taken a position that is arguable? (Will others challenge or oppose my thesis?)
- Does my essay support my thesis?
- Does my thesis present an idea that needs to be expanded on?

In Conclusion

Going over these steps and answering the questions will aid you in your quest to develop a strong thesis statement. Keep in mind that if the thesis is weak, it is likely the rest of the paper will be weak also. Have a strong thesis, and your paper will likely be strong as well. Practice developing strong thesis statements for your papers, and the rest of your essay writing should improve as well.