The thesis statement is one of the most important elements of any college paper. A thesis statement is a sentence (or two) that explicitly states the argument you plan to make in your paper. It typically goes at the end of your introduction paragraph, and it not only tells your reader what to expect from your paper, but also helps keep you focused as you write so that your paragraphs stay on topic and effective.

What makes a strong thesis statement?

- A strong thesis statement answers the questions asked in the prompt. In fact, directly answering the questions asked in your prompt is often the easiest way to come up with a strong thesis statement. When you begin planning your paper, read your prompt carefully and answer all the questions. These answers will help you begin to develop your thesis.

- A strong thesis statement makes an argument that can be debated. This argument is the position you will take in your paper. Many students confuse the thesis with the topic. A topic cannot be argued. A thesis can.
  - This paper will explore the effects of factory farming is not a thesis, because it does not state a position that can be debated.
  - Although factory farming makes meat more affordable, its negative consequences far outweigh its benefits is a stronger thesis, because it presents an argument to be proven.

- A strong thesis statement is specific. Your paper cannot cover every aspect of a topic, so neither should your thesis statement. Make sure your thesis statement focuses only on those aspects you do plan to discuss.
  - The above example is still fairly vague, since “negative consequences” could mean many things. It can be more specific if narrowed to Although factory farming makes meat more affordable, its negative consequences to consumer health far outweigh its benefits.

To write a strong thesis that your paper can support, don’t try to write your thesis statement first. Instead, do your reading and at least some of your research before deciding what position you plan to take. This will ensure that you develop an argument that you will have enough evidence to support.

Thesis statements can be challenging to write. If you need help with yours, feel free to discuss it with a tutor at the English Center.