Thesis Statements

Moving From Topic To Thesis

What Is A Thesis?
A paper is never simply "about" a topic -- it makes a clear statement, highlights a central idea, or states an opinion. This "thesis" or main idea gives your writing focus. Without a thesis, your paper may become simply a collection of random ideas. A thesis may be clearly stated or implied. Truman Capote's *Out There* has no thesis statement you can underline, but the description of a small Kansas town has a clear focus. It creates a dominant impression and is more than a list of facts.

Don't Confuse A Thesis With A Narrowed Topic
A key element in generating a thesis is limiting your topic. Take a general idea and limit it so you can intelligently discuss a topic without repeating generalizations that add nothing new. The more common or controversial your subject, the more you will have to find a new way of addressing it:

**General Topic:**
Teen Pregnancy

**Less Broad:**
Abortion and Pregnant Teens

**Tighter:**
Attitudes of Fathers

**Still Tighter:**
Abortion and Fathers' Rights

Abortion and fathers' rights is a good topic for a paper -- but it is not a thesis. A thesis must state an opinion or position.

Possible Theses
• Legalized abortion has led men to be less responsible in their sexual behavior.
• Fathers should have the right to prevent their children from being aborted.
• Because women bear children, only the mother should have the
right to terminate a pregnancy.

Points To Remember
• A thesis makes a clear assertion about a topic. It states an opinion and is not simply a limited topic.
• A thesis can usually be stated in a single sentence.
• The thesis can be directly stated in essay in a single sentence, stated in portions throughout the essay, or implied.
• Thesis statements can be placed at the beginning, middle, or conclusion -- wherever it will have the greatest effect on the reader.