

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.