

Thesis Statements

Some Tips, Formats, and Strategies

Thesis checklist:

1. Is it arguable (i.e., it presents a particular side that could be debated)?
2. Is it driven by your sources (i.e., have your sources helped expand your idea)?
3. Is it qualified (i.e., it is not too big, too broad, or overstated)?
4. Is it complicated (i.e., it is not obvious, simplistic, polarized, or overly assertive)?
5. Is it evolving (i.e., it is not repetitive or predictable; your synthesis “evolves” it)?
6. Is it audience appropriate (i.e., it accounts for readers’ values and knowledge)?

Formats to try:

- Pose a question: Question *why* something is. Question *how* something is.
- While it appears as if X is about Y, it’s actually about Z.
- Although X is important, Y and Z help illustrate that...
- Insert qualifiers (hedging words), such as

Strategy 1 to try:

- Synthesize together two specific ideas from two sources. Then, use one of the sentence templates listed in the table below to make clear the result of putting the two ideas together. What follows could be the start of a thesis!

Signaling your interpretations/observations:	Signaling your main ideas/claim(s):
<i>This means that...</i> <i>In other words...</i> <i>What’s important to notice here is...</i> <i>Perhaps this means that...</i> <i>This finding might indicate...</i> <i>My analysis points to...</i> <i>It is possible that this trend signals that...</i> <i>The most significant idea here is that...</i> <i>In summary, it is important to note that...</i>	<i>My point here is that...</i> <i>What I am claiming is...</i> <i>The thesis I hope to communicate is...</i> <i>My thesis has evolved from...</i> <i>Based on my analysis of X, I now posit that...</i> <i>So this helps me to conclude that...</i> <i>This is, in fact, my principal argument:</i> <i>Finally, it should be understood/argued that...</i> <i>Therefore, it can be assumed/concluded that...</i>

Strategy 2 to try:

- Replace “absolutes” with “qualifiers” to signal you acknowledge room for error, exceptions to the rule, and nuance (but don’t over-qualify your thesis either).

Absolutes	Qualifiers
will	may, might, could
forms of “be” (am, is, are, was, were)	may be, could be, might have been, may have been, appears, seems, suggests, indicates
all/every	many, most, some, numerous, countless, a majority
none/no	few, not many, a small number, hardly any, a minority
always	often, frequently, commonly, for a long time, usually, sometimes, repeatedly
never	rarely, infrequently, sporadically, seldom
certainly	probably, possibly
impossible	unlikely, improbable, doubtful

Others: basically, essentially, generally, kind of, mostly, pretty, rather, slightly, somewhat, sort of, various, virtually