

WRITING A THESIS:

The thesis needs to be a clear statement. It usually (but not always) appears in the introductory paragraph of the essay. Sometimes the “clear statement” has to be figured out by the reader, and may times it is simply written in the introductory paragraph.

The ideal thesis (like the topic) will be neither too broad nor too narrow for the compass of your essay. A 3000-word essay will have a more complex argument, and correspondingly a more complex thesis, than an essay of 600 words. One of the most common problems with essays is that they are based on a thesis that is too obvious to be worth arguing--a *truism*. Here are some examples of possible theses:

1. Specific topic:

How commercials manipulate their audience

A thesis that is a truism (i.e. an obvious statement not worth arguing):

"Television Commercials attempt to sell their products to the largest possible audience."

A thesis that is too broad (i.e. too confusing and too much to discuss):

"Several tactics are used to entice consumers to buy the advertised product."

(This thesis is likely to produce an essay that is simply a shopping list of examples, dull both for the writer and reader.)

An ideal thesis: *Teenagers are largely affected by exciting and humorous commercials that attempt to sell video games.*

2. Specific topic:

Problems fighting the medieval fire-breathing dragon.

A thesis that is a truism:

"Fighting fire-breathing dragons was hell."

A thesis that is too broad:

"The flames of passion in courtly love claimed more knights' lives than all the fire-breathing dragons in medieval Europe."

(The topic is doesn't work because it involves two areas of research, courtly love and fire-breathing dragons.)

An ideal thesis: *The lives of many medieval European knights would have been spared if knights had improved weapons and defences to fight fire-breathing dragons.*

AUDIENCE & TONE:

The **AUDIENCE** refers to who will be reading your essay and therefore it is important to consider things like vocabulary, sentence structure, and the support you use to back up your argument.

TONE refers to the “sound” you are intending to convey through your essay and will be based both on your audience and the purpose and/or type of essay you are writing. For example, a formal literary essay will have a very refined tone while a personal narrative essay will be more relaxed and conversational. Another thing to think about is how the writing sounds, as in either too timid or too aggressive. The ideal tone of an essay is confident and informed.