

THESIS:

All essays require the development of a thesis, which is essentially the statement that clearly shows both the focus of the essay and the stand/argument being taken by the author. Therefore, the purpose of the essay becomes to prove/explain/support/describe the thesis statement. The thesis is usually developed very early in the essay process to help direct the writer's thoughts and processes. However, the thesis can change as the essay is written and the writer finds new information.

WRITING A THESIS:

The thesis needs to be a concise statement. It usually (but not always) appears in the introductory paragraph of the essay.

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:

Specific topic:

How commercials manipulate their audience

A thesis that is a truism:

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

A thesis that is too broad:

"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: _____

Specific topic:

Problems in 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 unwieldy because it involves two areas of research, courtly love and fire-breathing dragons.)

An ideal thesis: _____

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.