

Developing a Preliminary Thesis

Your **thesis** is the sentence that states what your essay is about. It is often placed at the very end of the introductory paragraph. It lets your reader know your writing topic and the central point you will make about that topic.

Thesis: The current television rating system does little to help parents make wise programming choices for their children.

Topic: The current television rating system

Central point: It does little to help parents decide what their children should watch

Your thesis can also preview the essay by indicating **the main ideas you wish to cover, along with your topic and central point.**

Example: Working mothers have changed the character of the American family by contributing a second paycheck, by popularizing day care, and by creating a new division of labor in the home.

Topic: working mothers

Central Point: Working mothers have changed the American family.

Main ideas to be discussed: the contribution of a second paycheck, the popularization of a day care, and a new decision of labor in the home

The Qualities of an Effective Thesis

1. Limit your thesis to one topic and one central topic.

Two topics: The violence on television has an adverse effect on children, as does the blatant sexuality on MTV.

Better: The violence on television has an adverse effect on children.

Better: The blatantly sexuality on MTV has an adverse effect on children.

2. Avoid broad statements.

Too broad: The role of women dramatically changed in the past 60 years.

Better: The leadership role of women in national politics has changed dramatically in the past 60 years.

3. Avoid factual statements.

Factual Statement: The city is considering tax breaks for new businesses.

Better: Offering tax breaks for new businesses will encourage economic growth in our city.

4. Avoid a formal announcement.

Announcement: [This paper shows/ I will prove/The following essay will explain] why the state board of education should consider establishing magnet schools.

Better: The state board of education should consider establishing magnet schools.

5. Avoid expressions such as “In my opinion,” “I believe,” “It seems to me,” and “I think.”

Uncertain: In my opinion, the Women’s Center performs a valuable service and deserves a budget renewal.

Better: The Women’s Center performs a valuable service and deserves a budget renewal.

The above text is taken verbatim from:

Clouse, B.F. & Russell, K.L. (2012). *The Student Writer*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY.