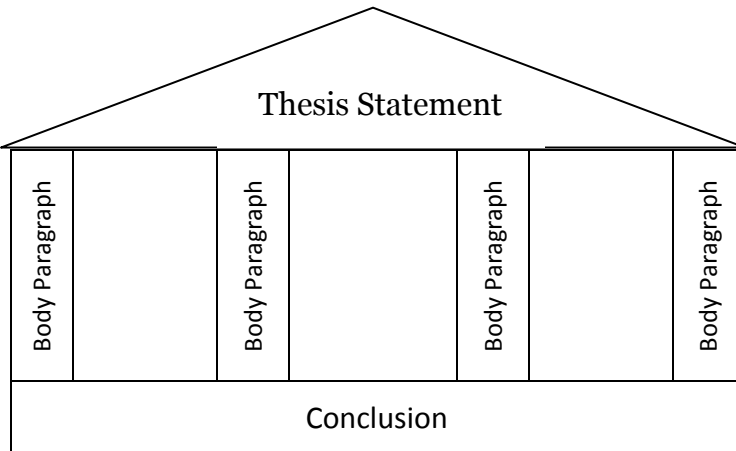


DEVELOPING A THESIS STATEMENT

WHAT IS THE THESIS STATEMENT?

- A **thesis** is an **assertion** or **claim** about your **topic**.
- It's a complete sentence (but occasionally 2 or 3 sentences) that presents your opinion on the topic.
- Usually placed at the end of the introduction.
- The thesis statement may also include a concise summary of the reasons why you believe it, supporting points, or evidence (also called a "map").
- If your essay were a house, then . . .



The thesis statement = the roof.

It establishes the overarching purpose and claim of paper.

It can be supported by evidence (explanation, facts, and examples) provided in the body paragraphs.

DRAFTING A WORKING THESIS

- Once you have selected a topic, you are ready to draft a "working thesis."
- A "working thesis" will focus your ideas, and guide you as you begin to write.
- A working thesis **may change**. You may decide to revise your thesis as you explore your ideas.
- A working thesis has two parts: **a topic portion** and **a comment portion**.

Topic portion = states the subject

Comment portion = makes an important point, claim, or argument about that subject

Topic portion + comment portion = working thesis.

Examples:

Topic: The death penalty + **Comment:** it should be abolished =

Working Thesis: The death penalty should be abolished.

Topic: One of the best examples of an American novel is *Huckleberry Finn*

+ **Comment:** because Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.

Working Thesis: One of the best examples of an American novel is *Huckleberry Finn* because Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.

- Draft your own working thesis here:

Topic: _____ +

Comment: _____ =

Working Thesis: _____

REVISING A WORKING THESIS

- ❑ Once you have a draft of your working thesis, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I answer the question(s) in the assignment? Have I followed my instructor's guidelines?
 - Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose? Is my claim arguable?
 - Is my thesis statement specific? Are there words or phrases that could be made more specific or explained?
 - Does my thesis pass the "how" and "why" test? If a reader's first response to your thesis is "how?" or "why?", then your thesis might be too open-ended or lack guidance for the reader.
 - How will I support my thesis? Can I provide enough evidence to support my reasons for believing it?

- ❑ Make revisions to the working thesis as you develop your reasons for believing it.

Example:

- **Working Thesis:** The death penalty should be abolished.
- **Revised Thesis:** The death penalty should be abolished because it is fundamentally immoral, ineffective in preventing crime, and sometimes mistakenly used to punish innocent people.

- ❑ Continue to make revisions to the thesis as your ideas become more complex and focused or as you discover new angles. Many writers continue to revise their thesis throughout the writing process.

Example:

- **Working Thesis:** One of the best examples of an American novel is *Huckleberry Finn* because Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.
- **Revised Thesis:** In Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, America's democratic ideals are reflected in the contrasting river and shore scenes.
- **Final Thesis:** Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* suggests that, to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.

- ❑ Revise your own working thesis here:

Working thesis: _____

Revised thesis: _____
