

A Thesis Statement

What is a Thesis?

“A single sentence that gives your topic and your point of view” (MLA 1.8.2).

“The point of view the writer wants readers to adopt” (St. Martins 526).

Two factors:

1. **Purpose** : describe, explain, argue, persuade?
2. **Audience**: is your reader a specialist, or someone like you?

The reader in the case of most of your RBC assignments will be your instructor. Some RBC instructors might require to you write for a secular audience.

A thesis for a research paper is generally not argumentative or persuasive. Normally it will be informative—reporting what you have learned about a topic.

Don't start research until you have a *provisional* thesis statement. It will help to write it down. Be prepared to modify or even abandon this statement as you research, BUT do it deliberately! Before you start writing for a final draft have a *clear* thesis.

It is never too late to modify your thesis. If research leads you in a different direction than you supposed, or, if in writing, your focus or opinion changes, by all means, modify your thesis!

Adapted from ***Write for College (Sebranick, Meyer, Kemperer):***

- Select an interesting subject. If it interests you, it will be easier to research.
- Think about your subject. Write down very briefly what you do know and what you don't know about it. Start with who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. Read a very general entry in an encyclopedia or reference work.
- Limit your subject. Be specific. Consider what kind of research will be required and whether you can handle the topic in a timely manner.
- Write a thesis statement.
 - Put your thesis in the form of a question, but then turn it pack into a declarative sentence.
 - For example in question form: “What are the early differences between the Southern (and Swiss) Anabaptists and those in Northern Germany and Holland?”
 - In declarative form it might read. “The Northern Anabaptists differed from those of the South by holding a stricter interpretation of shunning and an unusual doctrine with regard to the incarnation.”

“A good thesis statement tells readers what your subject is and more importantly, it tells them how you plan to treat your subject. The statement is usually a single sentence with two main elements: a limited subject plus a specific feeling or attitude toward the subject.” (*Write for College* 287-288).

Here is another approach adapted from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, a high school in Massachusetts.

http://www.crlsresearchguide.org/13_Thesis_Statement.asp

- Create a statement of purpose using an “I want to find out...” formula.
- For example, I want to find out if there were ever Amish groups in Russia.
- Create the thesis after you’ve learned something.
- Thesis: “The only Amish settlements in Russia were in Volhynia (now in the Ukraine) in the early 19th Century. They are now extinct.”