THESIS STATEMENT

A “thesis statement” is a name given to a central idea when it is written out as a sentence. A thesis, or theme, is simply the stand the writer takes on an issue or the main point he or she wants to make about a subject.

*The Decline of American Cities,* for example, is not a thesis statement but a title. In fact, it isn’t a sentence, and a thesis statement must be a complete sentence. “My subject is the decline of American cities” is not a thesis statement but an announcement to the reader. “The decline of American cities is deplorable” is not a thesis statement because it needs no essay to support it; it is an obvious statement of fact.

An effective thesis statement controls the writing. A poorly worded thesis statement guarantees a poorly constructed, badly focused, and uninteresting piece of writing. A writer should pay attention to the following guidelines when forming a thesis statement:

1. **An effective thesis statement is limited or narrowed down from a larger statement.** The idea is to give yourself a manageable, limited piece of territory to cover.

   **Large:** Our tax burdens are too great.

   **Narrower:** Federal tax rates penalize people for being single.

2. **An effective thesis statement is singular.** More than one major idea in an essay is too many.

   **Multiple:** Contributions to our mounting ecological problems will be made by the energy crisis, rapid increases in world population, and the plans for modern industrial development by third-world countries.

   --OR--

   **Singular:** The energy crisis is contributing to our mounting ecological problems.

   --OR--

   **Singular:** Plans for industrial development by third-world countries will contribute to our ecological problems.

   --OR--

   **Singular:** Rapid increases in world population will contribute to our ecological problems.

3. **An effective thesis statement is concrete.** A thesis statement that is limited and singular must also be concrete. Avoid abstract or vague expressions.

   **Vague:** Those who watch their cholesterol care about their health. (What aspect of health?)

   **Concrete:** Lowering cholesterol intake reduces one’s chances of coronary artery disease.