



The Writing Center @ JSCC

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement has three basic parts: **topic**, **focus**, and **supporting elements**. Depending on what kind of paper you are writing, the way these parts are put together may vary slightly.

Writing a thesis statement begins with understanding your topic and what kind of essay/paper you are writing. Knowing the audience for your work is also an important detail in thesis statement writing. For example, if you are writing a persuasive essay, it is important to know the audience you are trying to persuade.

Whether you choose the topic or it is chosen for you, critically consider ideas you can potentially write about as you work your way into a thesis statement. Ask questions about your topic and use the answers to narrow the focus of what you will include in your essay. If you are stuck, try using the **5 W's and the 1 H: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?**

Suppose you are assigned to write an essay to persuade students at Jackson State to carpool.

Who would be available for carpooling?

What are the benefits of carpooling?

When would carpooling at Jackson State begin?

Where would people be able to carpool?

Why should people carpool?

How can people learn more about carpooling at Jackson State?

The answers to the formulated questions can lead you into other questions and answers about your topic. Write down the ideas you have during this prewriting and group the similar details together. You can use these related concepts to narrow the topic of your essay into a focus for your paper.

As you are narrowing the choices for points in your essay, keep in mind that you will need to be able to write in depth about these details in the body of your work. Consider the pros and cons of each point, the sensory details, illustrative details, explanations of key terms, and any other evidence that helps your ideas to be clearer and in support of the focus of your thesis statement.

Look at the following examples of thesis statements. These sentences provide the topic, focus, and supporting details for several kinds of essays.

- A successful college student must learn to balance time for studying, going to class, and being with friends.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* turns the American dream into a nightmare by revealing issues of unrestrained materialism, moral emptiness, and social hypocrisy during the 1920's.
- Steve Nash's ability to drive, pass, and delegate make him the most valuable player in the NBA.
- Mycorrhizae, the fungi from the roots of plants, are necessary in order to protect plants from nematodes, provide necessary minerals, and supply water.