

Writing the Thesis Statement

Today's assignment is to follow the tips for writing a successful thesis statement and then look over and comment upon someone else's thesis draft. Please turn in this exercise, along with your partner's comments, tomorrow with your polished thesis draft.

Tips for Writing a Thesis Statement:

- Brainstorm the topic.
- Narrow the topic
- Take a position on the topic.
- Use specific language.
- Make an assertion based on clearly stated support.
- Distill the topic into a series of specific questions.
- Strive for a clarity and strength
- Complicate, challenge, and/or enhance existing literature related to your topic.
- Once you have your argument, massage, revise, and play with style until you have said what it is you wish to say in an interesting and elegant manner.

1. Brainstorm the topic—15 minutes

Brainstorm. You can “list,” free-write, free associate, “cluster,” or “loop.” Whatever you choose, make every effort to keep your words flowing for 15 minutes, even if what you write doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

2. Narrow the topic—5 minutes

Now that you have a good mess of words in front of you, look for patterns, repetitions, or other items of interest. Circle or highlight these words and phrases.

3. Take an initial and broad position on the topic—5 minutes

How do you feel and think about this cluster of associations? Are you in favor of it? Are you not? Write your broad position down.

4. Use Specific language—5 minutes

Are your thoughts clearly expressed by the words you have chosen? Quickly consult your “mental thesaurus” here. Could any of your words be substituted for more focused or interesting words? Write them down.

5. Distill the topic into a series of specific questions—5-10 minutes

What is piquing your interest? What is not? What questions do you have about the topic and the scholarship and literature surrounding it? Write these questions down.

6. How can you complicate, challenge, criticize and/or enhance the existing literature on your topic?—5 minutes. What rubbed you the wrong way when you read your sources? What was particularly convincing? What was not? Write down your thoughts.

7. Write your thesis—10 minutes. Massage, revise, and play with your style until you have expressed your thesis in an interesting and elegant manner. Experiment with vocabulary, sentence structure, voice, tone, and rhythm.

8. Trade with your partner. Read each other's drafts and make suggestions in light of the worksheet—10-15 minutes. Is the thesis reasoned? Is it clear? Is it arguable? Is it well written? How could it be better?

9. As you polish and revise your thesis tonight, take into account and incorporate your partner's comments, as appropriate.