

BUILDING THE THESIS

A strong thesis is the first essential element in any essay. Without a strong thesis your essay will lack focus; it will not have a direction. A clear, effective thesis, on the other hand, keeps the writer and the reader on track.

DEFINITION: A good thesis is a general but explicit statement that makes an assertion about your paper's subject.

Here's an easy formula to remember:

THESIS = SUBJECT + ASSERTION

A thesis sentence names your general subject and makes an assertion about that subject; it states the topic and the point you want to make about that topic.

Consider this sample thesis:

THESIS:	Heroes still exist all around us, but they aren't always famous; in fact, heroes are very different from "celebrities" in that their actions are meaningful, selfless, and courageous.
THE SUBJECT:	heroes
(+) THE ASSERTION:	they do exist , and they differ from "celebrities" because their actions are meaningful, selfless, courageous, and unnoticed

A good thesis is general but explicit.

In the above example, four qualities are named (meaningful, selfless, courageous, and unnoticed), which makes the statement explicit; however, these qualities are all general enough to need further development in the body of the essay. Make your thesis general but explicit.

The thesis is a complete, grammatical sentence. If you're using explicit terms, it helps to remember to use parallel sentence structure.

Examples:

- Three passions that have grown with me over the years are singing, songwriting, drawing, and writing.
- I decided to go to college because I wanted to improve my general knowledge and my chances of getting a good job.
- Moving to St. Louis helped me advance my career, make new friends, and experience living in the Midwest.