

Thesis Statement

Revising and the Checklist

WRITING SERVICES - UNCW - DEPAOLO HALL, 1ST FLOOR - 962-7857

Revising the thesis statement:

The first step in changing the working thesis into a strong, independent claim is to cut “I believe” from the beginning of the sentence. Consider the following working thesis.

“I believe that America’s cultural identity can be defined by art, literature, and film.”

This thesis is weak because the writer is asserting that it is their opinion. To make it into an argument or claim, the writer must be taken out of the sentence.

“America’s cultural identity can be defined by art, literature, and film.”

It still sounds a little weak. Although the writer is now absent from the statement, there is still doubt in the claim. This is where word choice becomes important. The key is to use words that make the claim stronger and more assertive. Taking out the passive voice in the statement will add strength to the statement.

*“Art, literature, and film **define** America’s cultural identity.”*

Although this is not the best thesis statement, the example above illustrates how to create and revise a thesis. If this thesis were to be used, it probably would be revised again to make it more specific; the types of art, literature, and film would need clarification.

Using diction in a thesis statement is important. Make sure the words comprising the statement are used correctly and help to reinforce the claim. Be direct, clear and concise. Do not use large, vague words unless they are necessary. Do not fluff the thesis statement. The goal of the thesis statement is to make sure the reader understands the topic at hand. Don’t confuse him/her with a big, flowery sentence.

Key points in revising a thesis statement:

Make sure that your paper supports your thesis statement at all times. One way to ensure this is by checking the use of the topic sentences throughout the essay:

Do they have any relevance to the thesis statement?

Do they pertain to the topic or argument?

If not, don’t change your paper right away; see if you can revise the thesis statement to meet the needs of your essay. If you can’t change the thesis, then change the essay.

(over)

If the essay is argumentative, **be assertive!!**

A Check List:

Here is a list of questions to help determine the strength of your thesis statement. After revising the working thesis into a more effective statement, ask yourself the following:

- Does my thesis statement introduce readers to the argument or claim?
- Will this thesis evoke discussions or arguments? Can it be opposed, or is it merely a factual statement?
- Is my thesis obscure? Is it too general? Would making it more specific be helpful for readers?
- Does my thesis guide the essay? Is it the foundation for the topics discussed in the essay?
- Is it clear that the progression of the essay pertains to the thesis statement?
- Are my word choices in the thesis statement correct? Are all the words used in the right context? Could I make the sentence stronger by cutting unnecessary words?
- If I am writing a research paper, does my thesis place the essay and reader into a larger, contemporary scholastic discourse?
- Overall, do I feel comfortable with and confident about the final revision of the thesis statement? Do I feel that it would pique a reader's interest?