**Developing a Thesis: part I**

## Thesis Statements 101

**Myths about thesis statements**:

· Thesis statements have to be one sentence

· Thesis statements have to have a three-pronged structure that sets up the three main body paragraphs

· Thesis statements should be written first in the writing process

· Thesis statements should be placed at the end of the first paragraph

· The thesis statement should summarize your whole essay

**The non-thesis thesis.**

A thesis needs to take a position on an issue. It is different from a topic sentence in that a thesis statement is not neutral.

**Bad:** This paper will consider the applications and limits of video game learning theory in the 21st century college classroom as regards reward, risk-taking, and interaction.

**Better:** Although many video game learning strategies are already present in many college classrooms, perhaps the most controversial and most promising technique unique to video games is that of risk-taking.

**The incontestable thesis**

A thesis must be arguable. And in order for it to be arguable, it must present a view that someone might reasonably contest. Sometimes a thesis ultimately says, "we should be good," or "bad things are bad." Such thesis statements are tautological or so universally accepted that there is no need to prove the point.

**Bad:** Cheating is a serious problem at the high school level and one cause is bad parenting.

**Better:** Cheating is not simply a problem in America’s high schools; it is a learned behavior that may have serious implications for people’s future social relationships and workplace behavior.

**The overly broad thesis**

It is not possible to write a good college-level paper about the history of California in a five-page paper. Besides choosing simply a smaller topic, you can narrow your thesis by specifying a method or perspective or delineating certain limits.

**Bad:** Cheating is caused by lack of parenting and the best solution to this problem is to tax parents whose children cheat.

**Better:** Although 21st century technology might seem the most important cause of cheating, a more fundamental problem has to do with parents of high schoolers who put too much pressure on their children to excel in school.

**The "list essay" thesis**

A good argumentative thesis provides not only a position on an issue, but also suggests the structure of the paper. The thesis should allow the reader to imagine and anticipate the flow of the paper, in which a sequence of points logically prove the essay's main assertion. A list essay provides no such structure, so that different points and paragraphs appear arbitrary with no logical connection to one another.

**Bad:** There are many ways that video games could enhance education, including system thinking, collaborative tasks, and what James Paul Gee calls “situated meanings.”

**Better:** Among the many learning tools James Paul Gee in video games, the most significant ones—system thinking, collaborative tasks, and situated meanings--all share in increasing degree an emphasis on seeing information as a whole, rather than disconnected facts and ideas as education is usually taught.

[[i]](http://angel.southseattle.edu/AngelUploads/Content/WAOL_OCLMASTERENGL9Y/_assoc/B1AAEE1D3EEA451B852A8C8FCBB5F8D0/#_edn1)

[[i]](http://angel.southseattle.edu/AngelUploads/Content/WAOL_OCLMASTERENGL9Y/_assoc/B1AAEE1D3EEA451B852A8C8FCBB5F8D0/#_ednref) The section on the thesis statements was created by Mark Fullmer, and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License