**Why thesis statements are AWESOME!**

* They are one sentence long.
* They don’t beat around the bush.
* They are powerful. Think of them as the map of your entire paper; without a clear thesis, your reader gets lost.
* They make a claim about your topic that can be debated (argumentative/persuasive).
* They are supported by the evidence you provide throughout the rest of your essay.

**Where the thesis belongs in the paper:**

* Although it is often the very first part of your PREWRITING for an essay, the thesis actually should not come until the last sentence of your introduction. It’s very important to remember that before you get into the body of your paper, you have to give your reader “the map.”

**What the thesis should say:**

* Very clearly, the thesis should answer the writing prompt using key words and phrases from the prompt to ensure that the writer is following the assignment.
* A thesis has TWO IMPORTANT PARTS: The WHAT (topic) and the WHY (reason or reasons).
* You want to avoid a thesis being too listy. This gives away too much information. You don’t want your paper to be too predictable (just as you don’t want to walk into a movie and know the ending before you find your seat).

**Let’s try it!**

Consider the following writing prompt: How is technology in Montag’s world different and/or similar to what we experience today?

Here are three attempts at thesis statements to answer the prompt. Given the information at the top of this paper, rank the thesis statements from 1 (being best) to 3 (being worst):

\_\_\_\_ Technology today is comparable to Montag’s world because in both it helps and hinders communication.

\_\_\_\_ Technology today is similar and different to Montag’s world.

\_\_\_\_ Technology today is comparable to Montag’s world particularly Bluetooth, X-box Kinect, and Smart Phones.

After discussing the above, you can now try to formulate a thesis statement of your own, based on our current writing prompt. **Once you have your thesis, show your teacher to get it approved.** *Remember, just like any aspect of writing, you may need to revise your thesis a couple of times in order to get it right.*

Experiment with Essay Leads

Renowned writing teacher Donald Murray suggested to a group of teachers at a writing conference, “I never proceed without an opening that I think will produce a good piece of writing. That’s the only never in my toolbox.”

**Some leads to try:**

* Anecdote: a brief story that captures the essence of the issue or situation
* Quotation: a voice not your own that speaks to or exemplifies the problem or issue (Make sure you know who the person is and include why they are an expert-see Donald Murray quote above).
* News: the writer gives the reader the who-what-where-when-why-how of a situation or issue, emphasizing why this is important
* Background: the writer gives a brief history of the issue of situation
* Announcement: the writer tells the reader what he or she is going to say about the issue or situation and takes an attitude

**Some leads to avoid:**

* A dictionary definition (Webster’s dictionary defines censorship as…”).
  + It’s a cliché.
* A question to the reader (“Do you feel annoyed when you try to have a conversation with someone and realize they did not hear you because they had ear buds in their ears?
  + It presumes the reader cares about the answer, plus it’s condescending.
  + Avoid unnecessary pronouns.
* A bromide or cliché (“We have all heard the expression, ‘Better safe than sorry.’ But is that true of today’s decisions being made by legislators during the government shutdown?”)
  + Your reader is already snoring. You were probably snoring when you wrote it…
* A lead that isn’t focused. (“Government control in this country has flaws. The flaws are not completely bad, but they need to be dealt with because it creates problems. There are a couple of things to be concerned about, even though the government overall is well-intended and trying to do what is in the nation’s best interest.”)
  + The reader is confused and bored before the writer has even started the essay. If you, as the author, are the expert, you should have a clear viewpoint and side that readers can follow and learn from.

1. What type of lead makes the most sense for you to attempt? Explain your thinking.

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Experiment with essay conclusions

Donald Murray later made this statement to the teachers: “The end must connect with the opening. What has been promised must have been delivered. Read the opening over to see what closing it implies.”

As an author, what is the overarching message you want readers to know as a result of your tireless research and efforts?

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2. Does this come across in your thesis? Circle one: Yes or No

**Some Conclusions to Try**

* Admonition or instruction: what the reader can do about the issue
* Prediction: an insight into how the future might be different, better, or worse
* Strong, punched statement: perhaps a powerfully considered, one-sentence paragraph.
* Anecdote: a brief story that reiterates the essence of the issue or situation
* Pointed question: leaves the reader thinking
* Echo: circles back to the lead

**A Conclusion to Avoid:**

Donald Murray surprisingly stated to the teachers, “Only rarely in effective writing is the closing a formal summary in which the writer repeats…what has already been said.”

3. Why would repeating what has already been said not be effective when writing?

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4. What type of lead makes the most sense for you to attempt? Explain your thinking.

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