Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement helps you avoid plagiarism by helping you clarify the difference between your own analysis and supporting evidence (which you cite) in your writing.

Advice from the MLA Handbook:

Develop your thesis statement

“Begin with a question, not an opinion” ➔ “Conduct preliminary research to shape an opinion” ➔ “Prepare a final statement, supported by evidence”

The best thesis statement is written after you have done some research on your topic. It usually consists of three parts:

1. Your topic
2. Your position on the topic
3. Evidence-based reasons for your position

Example: Bottled water should be regulated because the use of plastic bottles is creating an environmental crisis, water industries are creating water scarcity, and clean drinking water is a basic human right.

“The length of the assignment determines how broad or narrow the topic.” (MLA)

A common obstacle to creating a thesis statement occurs when the topic is either too broad or too narrow. If a topic is too broad your thesis will be vague and evidence will be difficult to organize; if it is too narrow it will be difficult to find evidence to back up your claim. Consider the requirements of the assignment: number of pages, percentage of grade, credits in the class. What topic can you do justice to within the parameters of the assignment? (example: Climate Change or Fossil Fuels or Electric Cars)
Thesis Statement Worksheet

Your topic:

Your position on the topic:

Evidence-based reasons for your position:

1)  

2)  

3)  

Working Thesis Statement:

Expect to modify this Working Thesis Statement as you do more research, think more about your topic, and consult your professor.

Final Thesis Statement: