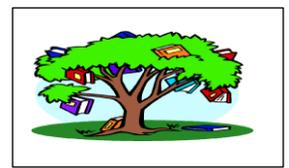


# Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



## The Thesis Statement

From explaining a process to arguing persuasively, a single, unifying idea should tie the entire essay together and set the reader's expectations about what is to come. It is usually expressed in one or two sentences toward the end of the introductory paragraph.

### What Does a Thesis Statement Do?

If you are writing in response to a question posed in an essay prompt, your thesis statement will **answer the question**. A good thesis may also provide a brief overview of **supporting points** to be expanded on later in the essay.

### Characteristics of a Strong Thesis Statement:

- ✚ It is not simply an observation or a statement of fact; it is a claim to be argued.
- ✚ It gives a clear, focused position, which is then supported in the remainder of the essay.

### Developing Your Thesis Statement:

- ✚ Begin by reading enough to develop a question.
- ✚ Then come up with a **working thesis**. This will help keep you focused as you brainstorm and/or research.
- ✚ Be sure to apply critical thinking to your essay/research process (pick up the handout on this).
- ✚ A thesis is a journey of turns, discoveries, and perhaps reversals.
- ✚ At some point, settle on a focused idea that you are confident with.

### Examples:

- Driving a hybrid vehicle has both positive and negative aspects.
  - Driving a hybrid vehicle is great.
  - Driving a hybrid vehicle is beneficial in that it allows a person to be eco-conscious, save money on fuel, and look good doing it.
- ✚ **Example A** seems fair and balanced, but it provides no clear position to argue. In most college writing, argumentation is essential.
  - ✚ **Example B** takes a position but makes no attempt to justify it.
  - ✚ **Example C** is the strongest because it clearly expresses a positive view of hybrids and gives the reader an overview of the major benefits to be discussed.