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## The Thesis Statement

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In a paragraph the main idea is stated in a topic sentence, but in an essay, the main idea statement is generally called a **thesis** or **thesis statement**. The thesis is the main point your writing will communicate. Everything in your essay should support your thesis statement. To generate a thesis statement, you must narrow your writing topic, formulate a tentative main idea, and brainstorm supporting ideas for the main idea. Once you have a good idea of what information you will use in your essay, you should revise your tentative main idea statement into a thesis statement.

You may want to use a **blueprinted thesis**, which is a thesis that includes the main areas of support in the order you will introduce them and thus acts as a blueprint for the essay.

**Example:** *My car has lots of disadvantages because it is unreliable, expensive, and unattractive.*

Basically, there are two kinds of thesis statements—direct and indirect. (They may also be called stated and implied thesis statements.)

**1. Direct Thesis Statement.** Some writers want to give a specific outline of their essays in their thesis statements (blueprinted). Read the following example:

**Example:** *The main problems facing this nation are a lack of job opportunities for citizens, government corruption, and limited university programs for poor students.*

From this statement, the reader knows that the body of the essay has three main parts. The first part will discuss job opportunities, the second part will talk about government corruption, and the last part will talk about university programs for poor students. This kind of thesis statement is called a stated thesis or a blueprinted thesis.

**2. Indirect Thesis Statement.** Other writers are not so direct. Discussing a similar topic as the previous example, these writers might use this statement:

**Example:** *There are three important problems facing the nation today that require immediate attention.*

From this statement, the reader expects to find a discussion of problems in his or her country. The reader is not given the specific information that will follow in the essay, but the general topic is clear. In this case, the reader must continue reading to find the supporting ideas of the argument. This kind of thesis statement is called an indirect thesis.

The thesis creates a focus for the essay and should not be too broad or too narrow for the assignment. A thesis that is too broad is a statement that is too large to be adequately developed in the length essay you have been assigned. A thesis that is too narrow is a statement that is not large enough to be developed into an essay. A well-focused thesis presents a main idea that can be adequately developed in the number of paragraphs or pages you have been assigned to write.

✘ **Too broad:** People are unhealthy for many reasons.

✔ **Adequate focus:** The diet of many American teenagers is unhealthy.

If you've been assigned to write a short essay, you wouldn't even be able to list all the reasons people are unhealthy. You'd be much better off focusing on a specific group of people and/or a specific reason or reasons why they are unhealthy.

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✘ **Too narrow:** American teenagers consume too much salt.

✔ **Adequate focus:** The diet of many American teenagers is unhealthy.

While you might be able to develop a good paragraph about the diet of American teenagers being loaded with salt, unless you are taking a nutrition class that requires in-depth reporting, it's unlikely you'd have enough information to develop an entire essay around this topic.

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## Turning a Discussion Question into a Thesis Statement

Many college writing assignments are given in the form of discussion questions. A discussion question can often be turned into a thesis statement. There are many ways to use the important words in the discussion question in a thesis statement.

**Assignment:** Discuss a place of business in your community.

**Thesis Statement:** Henry's Department Store is a wonderful place to shop.

**Blueprinted Thesis Statement:** Henry's Department Store is a wonderful place to shop because of its quality merchandise and helpful customer service.

**Assignment:** Prove that an electronic device, such as a computer, cell phone, or PDA, is useful.

**Thesis Statement:** Computers are very useful to students.

**Blueprinted Thesis Statement:** A personal computer helps students do their schoolwork, communicate with professors and friends, and entertain themselves.

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- **Example of an essay introduction (hook, connecting information, thesis statement)**

## A Common Fear

**According to several recent surveys, the biggest fear of most people is their fear of making a speech in public.** More than a fear of spiders or death, public speaking is something that often causes people to break out into a cold sweat, start shaking uncontrollably, and even feel as though they are about to die. Fear of public speaking can come from a number of sources, including childhood events and continuous media attention to the problem. Perhaps more important than the causes of this phobia are the strategies for overcoming fear of public speaking. *Many people are unaware that the fear of speaking in front of others can be overcome by visualization exercises, deep breathing, and preparedness.*

**hook:** beginning of introductory paragraph

**connecting information**

**thesis statement:** end of introductory paragraph