

The *thesis*:

- *communicates the main point, theme, or argument of the essay.*
- *directs the organization and content of the essay, determining which ideas belong in the essay and which do not.*
- *is stated in the introduction of the essay to engage and inform the reader.*

Follow these steps to build an effective thesis when writing an essay:

Step One — Think

Brainstorm to answer the following questions before you write the first draft of your thesis statement:

- What is the general subject of the essay? What will you discuss?
- Is there a controversy related to the subject of the essay? If so, what is it?
- What is your attitude or contention about the topic? What side do you take?
- What are the details you will discuss in your essay? Can these details be summarized by a single statement?

Example of Brainstorming:

- **wearing school uniforms**
- **2 sides pro requiring them / against requiring them**
- **I am for the requirement**
- **They show what school I belong to**
- **They help school guards block intruders**
- **They won't show if you are poor or rich**

Step Two — Draft

Write a “working thesis statement” in one or two sentences that responds to the questions above and communicates your position on the controlling idea.

Example of a “working thesis”

School uniforms help show what school the student belongs to, help school employees guard against intruders and lessen the economic differences between students. So I am on the side that we should wear them.

This “working thesis” states the general subject, wearing school uniforms. The writer has taken a side on a debatable topic and includes the details she will discuss in her essay.

Step Three — Revise

After you have written a working thesis, check to make sure you have created an argument:

- Avoid stating a thesis as a fact; include opinionated language.
- Try to make the thesis a single sentence that uses effective language use and style.

Example:

Students should wear school uniforms because they help show to what school the student belongs, help school employees guard against intruders and lessen the economic differences between students

The term “should wear” indicates the writer’s position on the topic and the combination of the two sentences into one more complex statement shows a more effective use of language and style.

Step Four — Review

To be sure your *focus* is clear, consider the following:

- Have you addressed all parts of the writing assignment in the thesis statement?
- Are the controlling idea and your position clearly stated?

Example:

Students should be required to wear school uniforms because they help show what identify the student’s school, help school employees guard against intruders and hide economic differences between students

The prompt uses a key term: “required” that the writer had not included in earlier drafts of the thesis. And the revision of the terms “identify” and “hide” more clearly states the controlling idea that will be discussed in the essay.