



# ESL Writing the Thesis Statement

South Campus Learning Center, Communications Lab.

Updated by Bill DeLeeuw 07-14-05 Permission to copy and use is granted to all FCCJ staff provided this copyright label is displayed.

For more information, visit the Learning Services web site: [www.fccj.edu/lc](http://www.fccj.edu/lc)

The introduction (or first paragraph) begins the essay and prepares the reader for what will follow. The introduction contains the thesis statement, which announces the main ideas for the entire essay (**at least two or three points**)

The **thesis statement**, like the topic sentence in a paragraph, further focuses the subject because it must clearly state, in sentence form, the writer's **central point**: the main ideas or opinions that the rest of the essay will support and discuss.

The **thesis statement** should be as specific as possible. By writing a specific **thesis statement**, you focus on your subject and give yourself as well as your reader a clearer idea of what will follow in the body of the essay.

.First, you can make a vague **thesis statement** more specific. As a general rule, replace vague words with more exact words and replace vague ideas with more complete information:

**Vague Thesis Statement** - My recent trip to California was really bad.

**Revised Thesis Statement** - My recent trip to California was an unhappy experience because I lost my luggage and arrived late

The first **thesis statement** above is vague because of the inexact words "really bad." This statement gives no indication of why the trip was bad or just what the rest of the essay will discuss.

The second **thesis statement** is more specific. The words “really bad” are replaced by the more exact word “unhappy.” In addition, the writer has added more complete information about why the trip was disappointing.

From this **thesis statement**, it is clear that the essay will discuss the ways in which the loss of the luggage and being late upset the writer's plans.

► Second, you can also make a **thesis statement** more specific by stating the **natural divisions** of the subject. Done thoughtfully, this approach can set-up an outline for the entire essay:

**Vague Thesis Statement** - The movie **Waterworld** seemed ridiculous.

**Revised Thesis Statement** - The characters, the dialogue, and the plot of the movie **Waterworld** all seemed ridiculous.

The first **thesis statement** above gives little specific direction to the writer or the reader.

The second **thesis statement**, however, actually sets up a plan for the whole essay. The writer has divided the subject into **three parts** - the characters, the dialogue, and the plot - and he or she will probably devote one paragraph to discussing the ‘ridiculousness’ of each one. This writer probably first ‘thought on paper’ to get ideas.

Now take time to form your idea for a topic. If you are having trouble choosing a topic, a tutor can help you with this.

After you have your topic then practice writing a **thesis statement**. When you have think that you have written your best **thesis statement** for the topic you selected, check with your tutor to see if it is correct.

Do this a few times working with the tutor until you are in agreement that that you have a good **thesis statement**.

The three major points in your thesis will then become the **topic sentences** for each of the body paragraphs.



