

4) What a Thesis Statement Is NOT:

Recognizing what a thesis is **NOT** aids in formulating an effective and complete thesis statement: First, a thesis is not just a title (**The Challenge of Camping**). Neither is it merely the mention of the topic to be addressed (**Camping**). In addition, it is not the announcement of the subject: **I am going to write about my camping challenges**. Finally, a thesis statement is not a statement of absolute fact, for which no judgment or interpretation is necessary: **I went camping during the hottest week of the summer**. Rather, it is a complete sentence which expresses some idea, belief, opinion, reaction, or position which must be explained and supported: **On my latest camping expedition, I encountered many unforeseen problems**.

5) Where a Thesis Statement Is Located:

The thesis, if stated directly, may appear anywhere within the essay. Frequently, the thesis appears early, often within the first paragraph. Some writers thrust their reader into the thesis statement with the first sentence. Others ease the reader into the thesis by prefacing it with an introductory comment, anecdote, scenario, example, or illustration. A controversial subject or one requiring extended explanation or exemplification may have its thesis placed at the end of the essay for easier acceptance and greater impact.

6) Why Use a Working Thesis Statement:

An author usually begins with a working or trial thesis which expands, decreases or changes, depending upon the amount and focus of supporting material. A working thesis consists of two parts: a topic and a comment about that topic. The comment is an inference, an assertion, a judgment, an opinion, an evaluation. The thesis statement, **The current rise in school violence may be traced to three major causes**, contains both a topic (**the rise of school violence**) and a comment or an assertion (**may be traced to three major causes**). From this thesis, the reader expects the author to name three major causes and to support how each is a major contributor to school violence.

7) How a Thesis Statement Establishes Focus:

A good thesis is both restricted (manageable) and unified. The shorter the essay, the more specific (focused) the thesis statement needs to be. For example, a one to three page essay might analyze the use of contrast in one of Robert Frost's poems, but not in a large number of his poems.

For anything less than book length, the following thesis lacks unity and is unmanageable: **Detective stories are not a high form of literature, but people have always been fascinated by them, and many fine writers have experimented with them.**

A more unified and focused thesis would be **Detective stories appeal to the basic human desire for thrills**. An even more restricted thesis would be the following: **That detective stories appeal to the basic human desire for thrills may be exemplified by the popular television series *Criminal Minds***. Effective, this thesis statement appeals to reader interest and presents an idea which is specific, manageable, and supportable.