Focusing an Essay with a Thesis

When writing an essay, the main thing you want to keep in mind is that you need a clear **focus** to follow through with. This focus should come in the form of a statement called a **thesis** . It can be helpful to place the focus statement **in your introduction** – the most common placement is the last sentence of the opening paragraph. That is where thesis statements are usually expected in academic writing, however, it is not necessary that you place the statement there. The best place for a thesis is where it works the best in your essay. You have the **choice** of where to place it, but it can be important and helpful to place it at the **beginning** of your essay so that your focus is clearly stated and you can follow through with that focus.

What is a thesis statement?

A **clear** statement of your **focus,** or your **main point.**

- What is the basic idea or point you want to convey to the reader?
- What is your argument? What do you want to make the reader believe?
- Can you think of at least three or four points that clearly relate to this main point? In other words, can your point be argued?

A **promise** to the reader.

- What promise do you make to the reader about where your essay is going?

What a thesis statement is NOT

- It is NOT a statement of fact – it is a statement of opinion.
- It should NOT be written in the form of a question.

How do I focus my essay?

- The first sentence of each paragraph should make a point that clearly relates back to the focus statement (thesis).
- Each paragraph should contain information **relevant** only to the paragraph's opening sentence.
- This information should include an explanation of **how or why** the point you are making relates back to the focus statement (thesis).
- Make sure you keep and carry through with the **promise** you made to the reader.

Do I have a thesis?

- The best way to check for your focus statement (thesis) is to **underline** it. Then, it will be easier to check through the rest of your essay to make sure each paragraph relates to the underlined statement.