What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is best defined as the central idea, argument, or focus of your paper. The thesis is typically composed of one or two sentences that illuminate the purpose of the writing and is often found at the end of the introductory paragraph. To develop a good thesis, consider the following:

1. Try brainstorming, freewriting, or another prewriting technique to identify an appropriate topic.

2. Research your topic. Accessing Online Research Resources is a great place to start but be wary of the Top 10 Mistakes in Academic Research.

3. Craft your research question. Avoid yes/no type questions and, instead, focus on questions that speak to what you want to know about your topic.

Here’s an example to help you understand:

Research question: Do television stations and their sponsorship have an agenda when playing particular commercials during extended periods of programming?

Answer/Potential thesis: Yes, television stations and their sponsorship have an agenda when playing particular commercials during extended periods of programming.

Taking into consideration most theses start with a simple “Yes” or “No,” the remaining portion of the sentence is certainly a start! From this point, be more specific:

What types of television stations? What specific sponsors? What kind of an agenda? What specific programming? At this stage of your thesis development, you need your reader to understand where you intend to take your writing.

Modified and specific thesis: Popular movie channels and their correlating fast food sponsorship have an unhealthy and greedy agenda when playing their alluring commercials during extensive movie marathons.

In other words, the thesis process starts with an idea, forms into research, produces a research question, and finally develops into an answer that acts as the thesis statement itself. Just as with good writing, a good thesis statement follows a process.