

DEVELOPING A STRONG THESIS STATEMENT

Think of your thesis statement as the answer to the problem, question, or contradiction your paper explores. A strong thesis statement:

1. **TAKES A STAND**
It takes a position on an important problem, issue, or debate.
2. **JUSTIFIES DISCUSSION**
It is not a given, but controversial and worthy of further investigation.
3. **EXPRESSES ONE MAIN IDEA**
It provides the one idea from which the rest of the paper will organize itself.
4. **IS SPECIFIC**
It reasonably limits the scope of the paper in terms of content, time, place, and other parameters.

EXERCISE: RE-BUILDING A WEAK THESIS STATEMENT

THESIS STATEMENT (WEAK):

“Distance education is different from traditional classroom instruction, while long distance communication is increasingly used for corporate operations.”

This statement does not take a stand on an issue. It simply states two observations. It does not justify discussion since the fact that distance education is different from traditional classroom instruction is generally accepted knowledge. In addition, most people would not argue against the observation that corporations now use similar methods for training, conferencing, or other needs. Furthermore, this statement addresses more than one idea in two separate domains: school and work. Finally, the statement lacks specificity. It raises many questions for the reader such as: What kind of distance learning? Is it delivered via the internet, video, or mail? Is it with a technical school or university? What kinds of corporations? Are they small businesses or global corporations? When and where do they communicate?

THESIS STATEMENT (STRONGER):

“Lower-level math and science courses have been provided via the internet by Hazzard County Community College since 1995. While these courses may not offer the same amount of class discussion and interaction with faculty as traditional delivery methods, they do offer many basic educational benefits to rural residents of neighboring counties, especially those that do not have local colleges or libraries.”

Not only does the new statement take a stand on distance education and thus justify further discussion or debate, it limits itself to one idea by leaving out corporate operations. The statement better specifies the types of courses, the method of delivery, time, place, and population. The author sounds more informed about both sides of the issue and makes a more limited, but persuasive claim.

For more information: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/thesis.html>