



Subject to Thesis

Sponsored by The Center for Teaching and Learning at UIS



Terminology

- ♣ Subject area
 - A large category where your topic is located
 - Ex. Subject = Civil liberties
- ♣ Topic
 - The definitive issue the paper deals with
 - Ex. Topic = 1960's Civil Rights Movement
- ♣ Thesis
 - An assertion of the topic
 - Ex. Without Martin Luther King Jr., the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's would have been unsuccessful.

Subject to Topic

- ♣ Avoid broad topics
 - Subject = Women, Topic = Women in history
 - Topic too large for specific thesis statement
- ♣ Avoid topics that are not arguable
 - Subject = Toni Morrison, Topic = Biography
- ♣ Avoid topics that are too complex for your background
 - Subject = Linguistics, Topic = OE Northumbrian dialects

Side Note About Topics

- ♣ Most students find they lack paper/word length because they have failed to focus their research
- ♣ Most students find it easy to become the “expert” when they narrow a topic so it is manageable
- ♣ To narrow your topic, see the Pre-writing Strategies information on the CTL web page (www.uis.edu/ctl)

Subject versus Topic

Subject	Topic
1. Agricultural Production	1. The effect of mechanization on farm employment.
2. Genetic Research	2. Major developments in genetic research since 1962.
3. Drug abuse	3. Behavioral effects of marijuana.

What is a thesis statement?

- ♣ It is the central message of the essay
- ♣ It's the essay's main idea
- ♣ States the essay's topic
- ♣ It prepares the readers
- ♣ States the essay's purpose
- ♣ Indicates the focus

A good thesis statement includes:

- ♣ Subject that two people would disagree
- ♣ Corresponds clearly with the assignment
- ♣ Expresses one main idea
- ♣ Asserts your conclusions about the subject

Formulating a thesis statement:

- ♣ Step 1: What do you notice?
- ♣ Step 2: What 3 details are the most interesting?
- ♣ Step 3: Why are they the 3 most interesting details?

Having Trouble?

- ♣ *Turn your topic into a question (or multiple questions).*
- ♣ *The answer to the question is the thesis statement for the essay.*
 - Ex. Q: “What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?”



Subject to Thesis

Sponsored by The Center for Teaching and Learning at UIS



- **A:** “The potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class are”
- **OR**
- **A:** “Using computers in a fourth-grade class promises to improve”

Test Your Question

- ♣ Determine as many questions as possible
 - No question is too broad or narrow in the early stages
- ♣ Treat each question as a “possibility”
- ♣ Test each question with these others:
 - Is the question or answer plausible enough to be made convincing?
 - Is the question sufficiently challenging?
 - Is the question within your reach, given the limitations on time, your access to pertinent information, and the length of the assignment?
- ♣ Do not forget Who, What, When, Where, and Why if you are stuck

An example: Start to Finish Subject and Topics

- ♣ **Subject:** College Education
- ♣ **Topics:** upward mobility, first-generation, consumerism, price of books, tuition costs, overall college costs, availability of financial aid, technology, preparedness
 - *Choose preparedness*
- ♣ **An example: Questions and Answers**
- ♣ Does high school adequately prepare students for college?
 - Answer: No, high school does not adequately prepare students for college.
- ♣ What do students need to be prepared for college?
 - Answer: High school students need to be made aware of the demands required to receive a college education.
- ♣ What consequences result from underprepared students?
 - Answer: Underprepared college students usually do not succeed in college, some even fail out.
- ♣ **Thesis statements:**
 - High schools fail to prepare students for entrance into college, therefore, colleges should offer more remedial courses.
 - The lack of prepared freshman entering American universities indicates a need for high school teachers and counselors to reiterate the rigors of college curricula.
 - High schools fail to prepare students for entrance into college, therefore, many students fail to finish.
- ♣ **All together now....**
 - **Q:** Does high school adequately prepare students for college?
 - **A:** No, high school does not adequately prepare students for college.
 - **T:** High schools fail to prepare students for entrance into college, therefore, colleges should offer more remedial courses.
 - **Q:** What do students need to be prepared for college?
 - **A:** High school students need to be made aware of the demands required to receive a college education.
 - **T:** The lack of prepared freshman entering American universities indicates a need for high school teachers and counselors to reiterate the rigors of college curricula.
 - **Q:** What consequences result from underprepared students?
 - **A:** Underprepared college students usually do not succeed in college, some even fail out.
 - **T:** High schools fail to prepare students for entrance into college, therefore, many students fail to finish.
- ♣ **A strong thesis takes some sort of stand.**

Ex. Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.
- ♣ **A strong thesis justifies discussion.**

Ex. While most American families would view extended family as a burden, African American families rely on extended family for support.
- ♣ **A strong thesis expresses one main idea.**

Ex. Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.
- ♣ **A strong thesis is specific.**

Ex. Hunger persists in Appalachia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.