Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a clearly written, tightly focused sentence that tells your reader what you intend to prove or argue in your research paper. A thesis statement is *not* a statement of fact. Rather, it is an arguable point that it is your responsibility to defend and support in your paper. It should be neither too broad nor too general, nor should it be too specific or too factual.

A strong thesis statement is important not only because it tells your reader what your paper is going to be about, but also because it helps you, the writer, determine what information to include in your paper and what to leave out—use your essential/driving question as a guide.

Thesis statements usually appear at or near the end of the first, or introductory paragraph of your paper. *The thesis statement must be italicized.*

Review your research before you begin to draft your thesis statement. Consider what you want to say about your topic and what you can prove and support with your research. Not all of the information you found will be useful to you.

Some strong thesis statements a student researching cigarette smoking and the tobacco industry might use include:

- Cigarette smoking is a harmful and financially wasteful habit that should not be allowed in public schools.
- The tobacco industry has a history of recklessly targeting adolescent smokers, displaying little regard for the health and welfare of these young people.
- Inhaling second-hand smoke is just as harmful as smoking a cigarette itself; and what is worse, non-smokers rarely get the chance to decide to inhale or not.

Some weak or factual statements this same student *should not* consider using as a thesis might include:

- Cigarettes smell bad. *(Simplistic)*
- Cigarette smoking is bad for you. *(Too General)*
- Eighty percent of all adults over the age of 30 who currently smoke cigarettes started smoking when they were adolescents. *(Fact)*

Strive to make your thesis statement as clear and coherent as possible. Your statement should be concise (direct and to the point). Do not equivocate or “waffle” with conditional words or phrases (e.g. “may,” “probably,” “could,” etc.) and use active voice.