What is a Thesis Statement?
A Thesis Statement:

- Captures the main idea of your essay.
- Takes a stand or position on a topic.
- Then supports that position with examples, explanation, evidence.
- Should stick out and the reader should be able to connect each paragraph of your paper to the thesis.
What a thesis statement is not

A **title** is not a thesis statement:

- **Title:**
  - My first smoking experience

- **Thesis:**
  - Though many young people think smoking is stylish, I discovered smoking is a disgusting habit with many health risks.
A question is not a thesis  
(though a thesis statement may begin as a question)

- **Question:**
  - Why do people eat so much fast food?

- **Thesis:**
  - The American diet has become unhealthy and low in quality because of our demand for efficiency.
An announcement is not a thesis
(though a thesis statement expresses your opinion or position about a topic)

- Opinion:
  - My paper will tell you why people don’t accept differences.

- Thesis:
  - We often don’t accept people different from ourselves out of fear, ignorance or learned prejudice.
Why a thesis?

- A thesis statement declares what you intend to prove.
- A thesis gives your work focus.
- A good thesis statement makes the difference between a thoughtful informed essay and a simple retelling of facts or opinions.
What a good thesis statement is:

- **Restricted**
  - It limits or narrows the topic.
- **Unified**
  - It expresses one major idea about the topic.
- **Specific**
  - It uses specific language to convey to the reader the direction of the paper.
Process for developing the thoughtful thesis

1. Topic
2. Questions
3. Tentative thesis
4. Thesis
How do I go about developing my thesis?

- Decide on your topic
- Narrow your topic
- Put your topic in a sentence
- Add your argument, viewpoint, or opinion
- Add specific language to guide the direction of your argument
- Use the thesis test
Example of a developing thesis

- Decide on your topic
  (In this case the guiding questions are your topics. Choose one.)
  - What’s so hard about being me?
  - Narrow your topic
    - Racism
  - Put your topic in a sentence
    - People often judge me by my race.
Example of a developing thesis

- Add your argument, viewpoint, or opinion.
  - As a minority male, I am often judged based on ideas about my ethnic group

- Add specific language to guide the direction of your argument.
  - As a male minority, I must be aware that I am often seen as unintelligent, a threat or a loser.
Try the thesis test on your own tentative thesis:

- Does your thesis inspire a reasonable reader to ask, "How?" or "Why?"

- Would a reasonable reader NOT respond with "Duh!" or "So what?" or "Gee, no kidding!" or "Who cares?"

- Does your thesis take a position?

- Does your thesis provide an idea of the examples, explanations and/or evidence you might use?

If you answer "NO" to any of these questions, what changes must you make in order for your thesis to pass this test?
Are these good thesis statements?
(Use the three tests to decide.)

1. Terrorism should not happen.
2. I enjoy white water rafting.
3. Hip hop is the best thing that has happened to music in twenty years.
4. Though many people dismiss hip hop as offensive, hip hop music offers urban youth an important opportunity for artistic expression.
5. Steroid abuse.
6. Steroids, even those legally available, are addictive and should be banned from sports.
Now you are ready!
Go and write a powerful thesis statement!
Remember, you are not alone. Check frequently with your peers and your teacher for guidance!