

## **GWT Component 1B: The Thesis**

### **The Importance of the Thesis**

Once you have generated ideas during prewriting, it's time to develop your thesis statement. While not all writing requires an explicit thesis statement, using one in your GWT essay will help you fulfill an important component of the rubric. As you can see in the GTW rubric, high-scoring essays have a clear thesis while low-scoring essays have a weak or unclear thesis or lack a thesis altogether.

Some students have no difficulty taking a stand (which is exactly what a thesis is.) It's a very American characteristic to approach an issue by directly stating one's opinion. But in many other cultures this approach is seen as impolite, even arrogant. For this reason, some students try to avoid stating an opinion. Instead of taking a position on an issue, they write, "There are good and bad aspects to \_\_\_\_\_." However, because the GWT asks you to convince your readers to accept a particular argument or point of view, it is best to take a stand with a clear thesis.

#### **For example:**

##### **Topic:**

*Identify a product that you think is a good value. Identify the product and describe the reasons you think this product is the best value among similar products at this time.*

#### **Strong thesis:**

There are many video game consoles available to consumers; however, the superior console on the market today is the PlayStation 4.

#### **Weak thesis:**

People have different preferences for the type of video game consoles they like; it all depends on what they plan to use them for.

### **What Is a Thesis and What Does It Do?**

The term thesis comes from the Greek word for "putting" or "position." A thesis simply states your position on whatever you're discussing. In the prewriting stage, a strong thesis can help you focus and develop your own perspective on the issue. As you write, the thesis can serve to keep you on topic. When you've finished the essay, the thesis acts as a "cue" to guide your reader's interpretation of the paper.

### **How Is a Thesis Created?**

When writing an essay for a course, your thesis can develop gradually. But for a timed essay like the GWT, you need to have a controlling idea right from the start, even before you begin writing, and you don't have the opportunity to make substantial changes to this thesis. In timed situations, the following procedure, one that is admittedly mechanical, may be used to develop a workable thesis very quickly on any issue:

1. State the topic.
2. State the issue as a claim.

3. Combine the thesis with a rationale using a *because* clause.
4. Qualify the thesis, perhaps with *although*.
5. Reverse the thesis to test counter-arguments.

[This procedure is adapted from one originally presented in *The Practical Stylist* by Sheridan Baker.]

Let's try this procedure out with a GWT practice prompt:

Last year a group in Italy organized a national viewer's strike to protest the poor quality of television programs. Italians were urged to watch no TV for an entire weekend, and museums, restaurants, bars, theaters, art galleries, and other businesses gave discounts to people who brought their remote controls with them. The organizers said "Television is one of the principal causes of dullness and isolation, and is a drain on the precious commodity of human time."

Do you agree with the organizers of this protest that television is a waste of time? Do you think that this protest is a good idea? In a well-organized essay, discuss the role of television in your life and in the lives of others that you know, and whether or not people would be better off watching less television or even no television at all.

1. State the topic: *television*

2. State the specific issue as a claim:

*Watching television is a waste of time.*

The intensity of your claim can be modified by using an adverb:

*Watching television is mostly a waste of time, or Watching television is sometimes a waste of time.*

3. Combine the thesis with a rationale using a *because* clause:

*Watching television is a mostly a waste of time because shows on television don't teach us anything important.*

4. Polish and qualify the thesis, perhaps with *although*:

(For this example, think, "Are there instances where television is informative or educational?" Those instances would make up an important qualification.)

*Although news and educational programming can be valuable, most television shows fail to provide viewers with enough useful information to make television viewing worthwhile.*

5. Reverse the thesis to test counter-arguments:

(Ask yourself what a person who disagrees with your position might say. These counter-arguments may be important to address in your essay.)

*Watching television is an important way to be aware of popular culture and trends.*