**How to Write a Thesis Statement:**

**What is a Thesis?**

The thesis statement is a statement of belief expressed as fact and is what you are trying to prove in your essay. This is a strongly worded statement that is full of confidence yet must be free of personal allusion.

**Where is the Thesis Located?**

For a standard formal essay, the thesis is the LAST SENTENCE OF THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH. It should not appear anywhere else in the introduction and it should be restricted to ONE SENTENCE. By having it as the last sentence of the first paragraph of the essay, it provides a clear focus for the essay as it is the last statement read before the arguments begin.

**How to Write a Thesis:**

Examine your topic. Generally, the writer takes the thesis directly from your topic question. For example, if the topic is: “Is Macbeth a hero?” at least part of your thesis must address this question. Seeing how this is a “yes” or “no” question, the options are clear and the thesis must identify your position on this statement. A very basic thesis statement resulting from this topic question could be “Macbeth is a hero.” It is not very exciting, but it would work. It is, however, somewhat incomplete, especially for a standard five-paragraph essay.

When formulating your thesis, you should also provide as much directions as possible for your reader. Thus, state that Macbeth is a hero, but briefly outline in what THREE (for a basic five paragraph essay) ways he is heroic:

***Macbeth is a hero because he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.***

You simply need to fill in the blanks with specific examples that prove your point and your thesis is complete.

Do be aware, however, that some of the best arguments are the ones that go against conventional thinking. These essays allow you to exhibit critical and creative thinking; thinking that your marker will appreciate.

One thing that you do NOT want to do in a formal essay is create a thesis that does not take a stand. Do not argue that Macbeth is both heroic and not heroic. While this may work for the start of a dialectic essay in History, English compositions require you to fully persuade, in a formal fashion, that your thesis is valid. You may use converse arguments to highlight your position, but not to the extent that is becomes unclear what you are actually trying to prove. Be as specific as possible in your thesis:

**Some examples of bad thesis statements:**

1. I think capital punishment is wrong in Canada.
2. Child abuse is a big concern and something should be done about it.
3. Sometimes Macbeth acts heroically, while other times he does evil things.

**Some examples of good thesis statements:**

1. Capital punishment is a penalty that Canada can ill afford because it is against the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it allows the government to “play God,” and it commits the same crime for which the punishment is death.
2. Macbeth is an anti-hero because he commits treason, subscribes to witchcraft, and loses all compassion for those around him.

**How to Write Introduction and Concluding Paragraphs:**

**Introductory Paragraphs:**

The introductory paragraph is one that creates guidance for the reader, creates interest, provides background and identifies the thesis of the essay. Students often find it difficult to write introductions, so the following provides a guideline for information to include:

1. Indicate the name of the piece(s) of literature you are using and the author(s).
2. A BRIEF summary of the content of the literature. This should be no more than a sentence or two just to set up the premise of the story or an important theme. Note, however, that the summary should lean toward the topic; it should not be random information about the novel that has nothing to do with your essay.
3. A brief explanation or definition of important concepts that may need clarification in order for the reader to fully understand the direction or content of the essay.
4. The thesis statement.

**Note: This is a guideline to an introductory paragraph, not an outline.**

**Example of an Introductory Paragraph:**

In the dramatic play, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, the protagonist struggles with his conscience as he pursues his royal ambitions. Throughout the course of the play, Macbeth falls deeper and deeper into the mad schemes of the Weird Sisters and contemplates actions to which he was previously impervious. As he faces this conflict and is mired in treachery, he becomes an anti-hero; the antithesis of heroic behavior. While heroes are selfless and risk themselves to help others, Macbeth’s purpose persuades him to commit vile acts of treason and betrayal. *Thus, Macbeth is an anti-hero because he commits treason, subscribes to witchcraft, and loses all compassion for those around him*.

**How to Write a Concluding Paragraph:**

The conclusion is a summary of the main points in the essay. It is a restatement of the thesis (broken out of one sentence) and contains a decisive close. There should be a “clincher” statement offering words of wisdom or lessons learned. Conclusions can be relatively short and there should be NO NEW information presented in the conclusion. Concluding paragraphs often make connections between the literature and contemporary situations.