

HOW TO DEVELOP A WORKING THESIS

"Working" means "practice" or "scratch." A working thesis gives you enough focus and enough direction to proceed with your essay, critical analysis, or research paper, but also freedom to *change as you go*.

The thesis is your argument, your opinion, and your point. IT'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO PROVE IN YOUR PAPER.

A thesis statement is the one-sentence expression of your argument. It is made up of two basic parts:

1. the topic of your paper - what your paper is about
2. your ideas/focus/opinion on that topic.

EXAMPLE: *Greeting cards* (paper's topic) *reflect the changes in twentieth century American society* (opinion).

A practice or working version of this might have read more like this: *Greeting cards show how things have changed.*

With this start, you would soon realize the need to narrow your focus either through research (for research papers) or through more prewriting for expository essays for Comp I and critical analyses for Comp II. *Greeting cards have been around for a long time in many countries. The ones we are most familiar with, probably, are American and modern. The "things" that "have changed" are certain aspects of American society.*

Some thesis statements, called supported thesis statements, also contain indications of the three major divisions of support, in your paper, *a kind of essay map*.

EXAMPLE: *In their words, artwork, and reasons for being given* (major directions of support in paper), *greeting cards* (topic) *reflect major changes in twentieth century American society* (opinion).

Note: the order in which the directions of support are listed in the thesis statement must be the order in which they will appear in the paper.