

Refining Thesis Statements

A good thesis should be argumentative and controversial (i.e., if you could make a plausible case *against* your thesis, it is probably an argument), something not immediately obvious which you can persuade a reader to believe through the evidence in the body of your paper.

A strong thesis statement answers a specific question and takes a distinct position on the topic, is focused, and allows the reader to anticipate the organization of the argument to follow.

A weak thesis statement is vague (identifies a topic but does not specify an argument), offers plot summary or is a statement of fact, is un-provable, or does not give the reader a sense of why the argument is important.

Example A:

Attempted Thesis 1: Marge Simpson is important to the plot of *The Simpsons*.

Attempted Thesis 2: Marge Simpson is important to *The Simpsons* because she fulfills a significant family role as a mother and housewife.

Attempted Thesis 3: Marge Simpson is important to *The Simpsons* because she fulfills a significant family role as a teacher and caregiver to her husband and children.

Attempted Thesis 4: While Marge Simpson may be a model caregiver for her family, she is a different sort of model for her audience.

Attempted Thesis 5: Despite her role as a seemingly submissive housewife and mother, Marge Simpson comes to function for the audience of *The Simpsons* as a subversive force against “middle class” values.

Example B:

Attempted Thesis 1: Eating disorders are a significant problem among college-aged students.

Attempted Thesis 2: Eating disorders are a significant problem among college-aged men because they negatively affect academic performance, socializing, and overall psychological well-being.

Attempted Thesis 3: Eating disorders among college-aged men are overshadowed by a focus on eating disorders among college-aged women.

Attempted Thesis 4: Eating disorders among college-aged men are overshadowed by a focus on eating disorders among college-aged women; people don't notice this because an eating disorder is typically considered a women's disease and is stigmatized as such.

Attempted Thesis 5: Lack of attention to eating disorders among college-aged men not only leaves this group of students untreated but also exacerbates feelings of isolation associated with this disease.

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