

Troubleshooting Weak Thesis Statements (based on *Writing Analytically*)

WEAK THESIS	REVISION STRATEGY
<p>Thesis makes no claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May simply announce a topic w/o making a claim about the topic • May state an intention to write about a topic or present an organizational plan w/o making a claim about the topic • Introduces an essay that's primarily descriptive rather than analytical <p>Weak thesis: "This paper addresses the characteristics of a good corporate manager."</p>	<p>Raise specific issues for the essay to explore & resolve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try completing this sentence frame: "Though some people say ___, and others say ___, I notice that...." <p>Stronger thesis: "The very trait that makes for an effective corporate manager—the drive to succeed—can also make the leader domineering and, therefore, ineffective."</p>
<p>Thesis is overly factual; it makes a claim that does not need proving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An obviously true statement • A statement of fact • A statement w/ which intelligent people are unlikely to disagree <p>Weak thesis: "The jean industry targets its advertisements to appeal to young adults."</p>	<p>Pose an inquiry question and answer it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a specific avenue of inquiry: pose a question about the facts or an issue raised by them; identify an area of uncertainty or ambiguity • For instance, asking "Why is violence increasing in American schools?" might lead to this hypothesis: <p>Stronger thesis: "By inventing new terms, such as 'loose fit' and 'relaxed fit,' the jean industry has attempted to normalize, even glorify, its product for an older and fatter generation."</p>
<p>Thesis restates conventional wisdom (a cliché or truism)</p> <p>Weak thesis: "An important part of one's college education is learning to better understand others' points of view."</p>	<p>Seek a way to complicate your subject</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider other points of view • Avoid conventional wisdom unless you can qualify it or offer a new perspective on it <p>Stronger thesis: "While an important part of one's college education is learning to better understand others' points of view, a persistent danger is that the students will simply be required to substitute the teacher's answers for the ones they grew up uncritically believing."</p>
<p>Thesis bases its claim on personal conviction (likes, dislikes, values)</p> <p>Weak thesis: "Sir Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> proposes an unworkable set of solutions to society's problems because, like communist Russia, it suppresses individualism."</p>	<p>Explore other points of view; treat your ideas as testable hypotheses rather than obvious truths</p> <p>Stronger thesis: "Sir Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> treats individualism as a serious but remediable social problem. His radical treatment of what we might now call 'socialization' attempts to redefine the meaning and origin of individual identity."</p>
<p>Thesis makes an overly broad or vague claim, or an all-purpose claim that could apply to many contexts</p> <p>Weak thesis: "Violent revolutions have had both positive and negative results for man."</p> <p>Weak thesis: "<i>Othello</i> is a play about love and jealousy."</p>	<p>Convert broad categories and generic claims to more specific, more qualified assertions; find ways to bring out the complexity of your particular subject</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways to bring out the complexity of your subject • Replace weak verbs & broad nouns w/specific nouns & strong verbs <p>Stronger thesis: "Although violent revolutions begin to redress long-standing social inequities, they often do so at the cost of long-term economic dysfunction and the suffering that attends it."</p> <p>Stronger thesis: "Although <i>Othello</i> appears to attack jealousy, it also supports the skepticism of the jealous characters over the naïveté of the lovers."</p>