

## Narrowing your topic and thesis statement

When you first receive an academic assignment, the task may seem overwhelming. Break the assignment down into steps and work through a careful process to give yourself a clear starting point to guide you through the successful completion of the task.

**STEP 1:** With a partner answer the following questions?

- How do you narrow a topic for an essay? Put a tick to those that apply to you.
- With your partner discuss the following techniques

	Mind-mapping
	Using index cards
	Brainstorming
	Freewriting
	Talking with classmates/ friends/ family about the topic
	Researching

- How do you go about researching a topic?
- Do you prepare an outline before you start to write? Why or why not?

Once you have narrowed your topic it is necessary to write a preliminary thesis statement.

Your thesis statement is the central idea of your paper. A strong thesis statement will answer your research question and let the reader know what the answer might be. To arrive at a thesis statement you can brainstorm, freewrite and list ideas in a response to your research question. From here you can write a thesis statement that clearly expresses your opinion about the issue you are addressing in your essay.

**STEP 2:** Read the definition of a thesis statement

A strong thesis statement:

- is specific and expresses a particular point of view.
- does not simply announce the topic, state a fact, or make a generalization about the topic.
- is the answer to a question, the solution to a problem, or a position on a debatable issue.
- is supportable with evidence, facts and expert opinions.
- frames the structure of your paper.
- is typically one sentence but can be two sentences as well.

**STEP 3:** Analyse the following thesis statements. In the comment section state if the thesis statement is *poor*, *good* or *strong*.

Thesis Statement	Analysis	Comments
This paper will examine pay inequity for women.	Uses key words, but only announces the topic	Poor thesis
Women in executive positions still lack pay equity.	Uses key words and is specific, but only states a fact	Poor thesis
Pay inequity is wrong.	Only makes a generalization about the topic	Poor thesis
Pay inequalities still exist in senior -level management positions, and having lower pay than men negatively affect women.	Uses key words, is specific, expresses a point of view on the topic, and frames the essay, but does not increase the reader's understanding of the issues or focus and organize the essay.	Better thesis
While women's pay has risen since women entered the workforce in greater numbers in the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century, pay inequities still exist in senior-level management positions, and having lower pay than men negatively affects their effectiveness as managers, their ability to manage work and family life, and their opportunities for further advancement.	Addresses assumed knowledge about the topic, frames the structure, helps the reader understand the direction of the paper, and focuses and organizes ideas.	Strong thesis