Crafting a Thesis

Crafting a thesis is a foundational skill for any university student. As a college student, you'll write a thesis, whether writing a paper proving how phoenix imagery in The Hunger Games series is a symbol for Panem's rising from the ashes of a tyrannical government or proofing a mathematical equation for calculating cardboard shipping parcel weight limits.

Start with a Question

Starting with curiosity is the strongest way to begin your thesis. Read and think about the text, material, existing literature, etc. **What are the questions you have? Write them down! What are other people saying about this topic/text? How do you agree or disagree with the existing literature?**

If you don't have a specific question (for example, if you're working within a genre outside of the humanities such as engineering), start with the question: **What should my audience know by the end of my paper?**

For example: What is this work saying about... |OR| How is this work portraying... |OR| What are other people saying about this work? Do I agree or disagree? Why? [OR] What is one of the main points I want to focus on in this paper?

Take a Stance

Simply put, your question should lead to a stance that someone might argue against.

Base your stance on the guiding question.

For example, if you started with a question about how the work portrays X, your stance might look like "X is portrayed in the work by Y and Z."

Be Specific

Now that you've taken a stance guided by your question, we need to specify.

Be specific. When conveying your stance, answer these questions in your thesis: Who, what, when, where, why, and how?

These specifics do not have to be in order, and you don't need every element. However, you should express the elements that are necessary for your argument. These elements should contain your main idea and some supporting evidence.

- Who (or what) is your paper's focus?
- What are they doing?
  - Or what is occurring?
- When are they doing it?
  - Or when does X occur?
- Where are they doing it?
  - Or where does X occur?
- Why are they doing it?
  - Or why does X occur?
- How are they doing it?
  - Or how does X occur?