Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement?
A thesis statement focuses your ideas into one or two sentences. Its purpose is to tell your audience what point or claim you will prove in your essay. In an essay, a thesis statement is most often found at the end of the introductory paragraph. In this way, the thesis statement creates more of an impact on the audience.

What does a thesis statement do?
All thesis statements should have the following characteristics in common:

- It should narrow subject to a single, central idea.
- It should claim something specific and significant about your subject.
- It should be an idea that you can support with evidence, rather than a fact.
- It should convey your purpose and reason for writing.
- It should provide an outline of the points that you will be discussing in your essay. This will let the reader know what to expect, and it will help keep your argument focused.

How do you write an effective thesis statement?
When you are writing an essay you should construct your thesis statement around the question provided by your professor. If your professor has not given you a particular question, you should construct your thesis statement around your own viewpoint.

Make sure the topic is not too broad or general (e.g. choosing ‘the media’ as a topic is too broad; whereas focusing on one aspect of the media, such as television, is better). Your thesis statement should focus on a specific aspect of this topic.

Make sure that your thesis statement clearly expresses your position or viewpoint on the topic. Think of an idea or viewpoint that you can easily defend with examples and evidence.

Also, be sure to keep in mind the type of essay you are writing (e.g. comparison/contrast, cause/effect etc.) There are different ways you can formulate your thesis depending on whether you have to write about fiction or non-fiction.

Non-fiction —five paragraph essay
When you are writing a five paragraph essay it is important to include three main points (one from each body paragraph). E.g. “Many people immigrate to Canada to escape oppression, avoid poor living conditions, and learn the English language.”
The main points that you are covering are:

a. People immigrate to escape oppression.
b. People immigrate to avoid poor living conditions.
c. People immigrate to learn the English language.

Fiction—short story
When you are writing an essay on a short story, your thesis tends to be more specific and usually relates directly either to the question that you have been given, the short story, or both.

- E.g. Question: Show how John is unable to escape a life of crime by referring to specific examples in the short story.
- Thesis: “John is unable to escape a life of crime because of his abusive father, circle of friends, and drug problems.”