Thesis Statements

A strong thesis statement is a map that you provide for your reader to follow. It works as a guide to what is most important to understand about your writing, and it can serve as an outline to follow as you write. A strong thesis statement is composed of three parts: the **What**, the **What About It**, and the **Why**.

- **WHAT:**
  - This is the *subject* of the sentence and the basis of your topic.
  - The What should open the sentence as the clear subject.
  - State the full name of the What, avoiding pronouns.

  *For example:* Because of its benefits, it *should* be legal.
  *Instead:* **Medical marijuana** must be legalized for its medicinal properties, its implications to our legal system, and to our economy.

- **WHAT ABOUT IT:**
  - This is your *position* on your topic, your *argument*, or *what you will prove*.
  - The What About It should clearly state the purpose of your paper.
  - As the action of the statement, it should follow the subject.

  *For example:* Because of its benefits, it *should be legal*.
  *Instead:* **Medical marijuana** must be legalized for its medicinal properties, its implications to our legal system, and to our economy.

- **WHY:**
  - This is the significance of your argument, why you have chosen your position, how you will prove it, or what supporting evidence will be shown.
  - The Why can work as an outline for your body paragraphs.
  - Specify all of your main points, and try to present them in order.

  *For example:* Because of its benefits, it should be legal.
  *Instead:* **Medical marijuana** must be legalized *for its medicinal properties*, its implications to our legal system, and to our economy.

  ➢ **Consider the type of paper assigned** (Analytical, Argumentative, Expository, Reflective, Research, etc.) and any specific advice about how your professor may prefer thesis statements.¹

  ➢ Finally, **revise your thesis** as you develop the ideas in your paper. It’s written on a word processor, not in stone. You are allowed to change your mind.

  ¹ For a detailed look at how to tailor a thesis statement to your specific type of essay, go to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/