

STETSON UNIVERSITY

Writing Center Handouts

Guide to Writing an Analytical Essay

What is an analytical essay?

An analytical essay means you will need to present some type of argument, or claim, about what you are analyzing.

An analytical essay is not a summary. Analytical essays usually concentrate on **how** the piece was written – for example how certain themes present themselves in a story.

Thesis Statement

To analyze something is to ask what that something means.

An analytical essay answers how something does what it does or why it is as it is. Therefore, a thesis statement in an analysis paper should be answering a HOW or WHY question.

A strong thesis makes a claim about the subject that needs proving. It provides the writer (and the reader) with a clearly focused lens through which to view the subject.

A weak thesis either makes no claim or is an assertion that does not need proving.

It is a fuzzy lens that will not help the writer (or the reader) be guided to a better understanding of the subject.

Most weak thesis statements suffer because they are overly broad (or not specific enough)

Broad Noun	+	Weak Verb	+	Vague Adjective
The economic situation		is		bad

Specific Noun	+	Active Verb	+	Assertive Prediction
The tax polices of the current administration		threaten to reduce the tax burden on the middle class		by sacrificing education and health care programs.