



The Writing Center

at

STETSON UNIVERSITY



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/>