

The Thesis Statement

With few exceptions, most papers you will write at Bow Valley College will require some form of an academic argument. To start with an academic argument, you must take a position and have a point to make. The main point of your assignment will be the thesis of your paper. Your thesis is a firm statement or claim regarding your topic. It **must** be in your introductory paragraph.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind while thinking about a tentative thesis:

- I) Your thesis should be clear, assertive, concise, and specific.
- II) Your thesis should be relevant to the question/topic.
- III) Your thesis should be debatable.
- IV) You should be able to state your thesis as a complete sentence.

Weak Thesis Examples:

“Drinking and driving is bad.”

This is a true statement that cannot be logically debated.

“Emily Dickinson’s poems about death are some of the most interesting ever written.”

This is a personal opinion, as opposed to a thesis, because the reader only knows that the author likes Emily Dickinson’s poems about death.

Strong Thesis Examples:

“Drunk driving laws need to include stricter penalties for those convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol.”

This is a clear, concise argument that is debatable.

“Because I could not stop for Death” challenges preconceptions that Dickinson’s contemporaries had about death, and in doing so it makes us challenge ours as well.”

This thesis limits the paper's scope by focusing on a single poem; it makes an assertion to defend (that Dickinson challenged 19th century preconceptions about death), and it shows why this point is significant to the reader (because the reader might have their own preconceptions challenged).