**Thesis Statements**

Here is an exercise to help create a thesis statement in 3 simple steps:

**Step #1** – Think of a broad subject and then narrow that subject into a more specific topic.   Example –*I want to write about the subject of what skills a college student learns in college, and I want to focus on the skill of writing (topic).*

**Step #2**– Once the topic has been established, create a specific question that relates to the topic:  *Why is it important that college students learn how to write well?*

**Step #3** – Now, create an answer to the question above:  *Because writing is a skill that is required in most classes, college students need to learn how to write well in order to succeed academically*.  This answer becomes a potential working thesis statement for an essay.    
This exercise can be used to help create a thesis statement for any type of essay with any topic.

**A thesis statement:**

* tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
* is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
* directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
* makes a specific claim that others might dispute.
* is usually a single sentence near the beginning of your paper (most often, at the end of the first paragraph) that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

Example of an argumentative thesis statement:

“High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.”

The paper that follows should:

* Present an argument and give evidence to support the claim that students should pursue community projects before entering college

The thesis sentence is the single most important sentence in any piece of persuasive/argumentative writing. A good thesis is (in the words of writing teacher Peter Elbow) the essay's "center of gravity." Good theses (the plural of thesis) are difficult to craft. It is all too easy to go astray.

Analyze each of the following theses and determine what makes the statement problematic. Keep in mind that some theses may contain multiple flaws.

1. My subject is the incompetence of Professor Jones.
2. I want to share some thoughts with you about our space program.
3. The thesis of this paper is that it is difficult to solve our environmental problems.
4. In today's society, child abuse is an awful thing.
5. The capital of Illinois is currently Springfield; at one time, it was Vandalia.
6. Smoking damages the body.
7. Many people were saddened by the space shuttle Columbia tragedy in February.
8. I do not believe women should be treated in a sexist manner.
9. Who makes the important decisions in America's cities?
10. A seventeen-inch computer monitor is easier to read than a fifteen-inch monitor.
11. Life is a complicated endeavor but always a joy to experience.
12. Bruce Willis is an interesting actor who has made many movies.
13. Cell phones are becoming increasingly popular and are in use almost anywhere one goes.
14. The most important thing any maternal or paternal figure can do for human offspring is assist them in articulating the language messages they are likely to encounter in published works of literature; this is particularly important in the foundational years of existence before the offspring enters a formal educational environment.