

Testing the Working Thesis

1. Does it fit the prompt? Does it clearly relate to the question asked?
2. Does the thesis promise the reader something? In other words, does it suggest how the writer’s position might be argued?
3. Does it pass the “who cares?” test or the “wow, I never thought about it like that!” test?

Technique	Description	Example
1. Purpose statement	Begin with a purpose statement that you will later turn into a thesis statement.	<p>Assignment: Discuss the history of the Reform Party and explain its influence on the 1990 presidential and Congressional election.</p> <p>Purpose Statement: This paper briefly sketches the history of the grassroots, conservative, Perot-led Reform Party and analyzes how it influenced the economic and social ideologies of the two mainstream parties.</p>
2. Question-to-Assertion	If your assignment asks a specific question(s), turn the question(s) into an assertion and give reasons why it is true or reasons for your opinion.	<p>Assignment: What do Aylmer and Rappaccini have to be proud of? Why aren't they satisfied with these things? How does pride, as demonstrated in "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," lead to unexpected problems?</p> <p>Beginning thesis statement: Alymer and Rappaccini are proud of their great knowledge; however, they are also very greedy and are driven to use their knowledge to alter some aspect of nature as a test of their ability. Evil results when they try to "play God."</p>
3. Main idea	Write a sentence that summarizes the main idea of the essay you plan to write.	<p>Main idea: The reason some toys succeed in the market is that they appeal to the consumers' sense of the ridiculous and their basic desire to laugh at themselves.</p>
4. List ideas	Make a list of the ideas that you want to include; consider the ideas and try to group them.	<p>A. nature = peaceful</p> <p>B. war matériel = violent (competes with A?)</p> <p>C. need for time and space to mourn the dead</p>

		<p>D. war is inescapable (competes with C?)</p>
<p>5. Formula</p>	<p>Use a formula to arrive at a working thesis statement (you will revise this later).</p>	<p>A. Although most readers of _____ have argued that _____, closer examination shows that _____.</p> <p>B. _____ uses _____ and _____ to prove that _____.</p> <p>C. Phenomenon X results in a combination of _____, _____, and _____.</p>

Source: The Writing Center, University of Wisconsin Madison. Developing a thesis statement. http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/thesis_composedraft.html.