How do I write a thesis statement?

Follow the questions on this flowchart to help you organize your thoughts and generate ideas for creating a thesis. Think about each question, because they are all important parts of your thesis. Please see examples on the other side for ideas. You can also use this flowchart to help you figure what you should include in your introduction!

Think about the topic you are writing about. Even if you are assigned a specific topic for your class, try to think about what unique properties the topic has that might be interesting to you.

Why did you pick the topic?

If this specific topic doesn’t interest you particularly, what might interest others in it? Can you relate to or understand why they would be interested in it?

If you’re stuck, go through the flow chart with multiple topics and see which topic comes naturally or seems the most compelling to you.

These two questions should be answered by using the unique properties about your topic that interest you. Chances are, what you want to know about the topic – someone else wants to know, too.

The key to these questions is using ideas that genuinely intrigue you. Don’t write what you think your professor wants to hear, but remember to keep the assignment guidelines in mind. You are the one that has to spend time researching the topic, so you should pick a topic you like so that you don’t want to cry while you are working on your assignment.

Here is your chance to make your mark! Step out on a limb and make a claim that will interest your readers. Make a claim based off of what you think; you can always change it if you are having troubles finding sources.

Remember you can ALWAYS change your thesis. If you start writing your paper and realize that you are not supporting the claim you said you were going to – don’t change three pages of what you have written, change your thesis. It is much easier to change one sentence than to change an elaborate argument you have written.

Why is it important that what you’re adding is new information? You not only want to make the paper interesting to your audience (your professor), but it will also make the paper interesting to you.

One reason writing papers can be boring is because you are repeating what other sources have said. If you try to find a unique perspective on your topic, writing the paper will become that much more interesting – and if you’re interested it comes across in your writing (which I don’t have to tell you could lead to a better grade!).

Form these thoughts into a coherent thesis.
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- Pirating TV shows: This is something I do a lot and I know tons of others who do it as well.

- What am I writing about?
  - The symbolism of flowers in the book *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf

- Why am I writing about this topic?
  - I noticed that flowers came up a lot in the text while I was reading.

- What do I want to know or want others to know about this topic?
  - I want to find a cohesive meaning for the usage of red and white roses in the book.

- What is significant about this topic?
  - This book was written right around WWI and red and white roses are a symbol for England, where the book takes place.

- What claim am I going to make about this topic?
  - I think that since the characters Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway are often present with the red and white roses, that these two characters are representative of England (just like the flowers).

- How am I going to support my claim?
  - I will support my claim by using quotes from the book and by researching the symbolism of red and white roses as well as how Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway function in the book.

- Is what I'm adding new information?
  - After a quick search through McIntyre's online databases I found hardly any articles on Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway as symbols for England. My idea is original!

- Pirating television shows on the internet may take away from those who created the shows, but pirating should not be illegal because the pirates do not do so with an intent to cause harm to the makers of the shows, many of the pirates can't afford to purchase the shows or watch them on expensive channels, and if pirates are able to preview the show they are more likely to purchase it later.

- The red and white roses in *Mrs. Dalloway* are not only significant in the fact that they are the flower emblem of England, but also because they represent the unity of the Dalloways' marriage as well, meaning that the Dalloways' marriage is in fact an extended metaphor of post-war England. England, like the Dalloways, was unstable and ignorant of some of the problems the country had.