**TIPS FOR CONSTRUCTING A THESIS STATEMENT**

By definition, a thesis is an argument that provides the focus for an essay.

In your freshmen research paper, you must take a position on an issue or topic, and that position must be arguable.

**What makes a thesis arguable?**

1. It is *not* a statement of fact or an assertion with which most people are likely to agree.

2. It should address a problem that has no obvious or absolute solution or answer.

3. It should be a view that can be debated using reason, argument, and logic.

4. It should be an opinion that is not simply a personal preference or personal taste.

5. It must be supported by facts or evidence that can be found.

6. It should *not* be moralistic or judgmental, but sticks to reason and facts.

7. A thesis statement should not contain two conflicting ideas. If two ideas are in conflict, it is impossible to support them both.

**Exercise #1:** Which of the following are arguable and which are inarguable? Of the arguable ones, which are the best theses and which need work?

Write ‘A’ if arguable, ‘I’ is inarguable.

1. Free speech is a good thing.
2. Censorship is bad for our country.
3. Communism is a type of government that is evil and should be banned.
4. This paper will consider the advantages and disadvantages of free speech.
5. Although we have the right to say what we want, we should avoid hurting other people's feelings.
6. Mustangs are prettier than Lamborghinis.
7. Dogs are better pets than cats.
8. The government has the right to limit free speech in cases of overtly racist or sexist language because our failure to address such abuses would effectively suggest that our society condones such ignorant and hateful views.
9. Labor unions declined in the 1980s.
10. There is too much violence and sex on television.

**Exercise #2:** Transform each of the following topics into an arguable thesis.

1. Free access to computers for all students in public schools.
2. The advantages and disadvantages of iPhones.

**Exercise #3: Evaluating Thesis Statements**

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| EXAMPLE | WEAK | SO-SO | STRONG | WHY? |
| Trade had both good and bad effects on the Roman Empire. |  |  |  |  |
| Although both the Qin and the Han dynasties inevitably ended, the incredible success of the Han dynasty was due to the emperors' dedication to the perfection of the government - politically, geographically, and culturally. By governing for the people, the Han dynasty was able to last hundreds of more years than the Qin dynasty, who's king's selfish ambitions blinded him from his responsibilities. |  |  |  |  |
| Trade led to the growth of Medieval African kingdoms, but it also led to the slave trade. |  |  |  |  |
| Unless people are conscious of pollution, the world will be destroyed by 2050. |  |  |  |  |
| Trade has had a tremendously positive effect on Medieval Africa because it led to economic growth of several African kingdoms and the spread of religion and culture throughout the continent. |  |  |  |  |
| In Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, the chess game parallels the struggle between Harry and Voldemort throughout the series. |  |  |  |  |
| Although the actions were necessary and understandable, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unjust. Not only was it dropped on civilian territory, but Japan was on the verge of surrendering and the bombing caused terrible effects on the people of Japan. |  |  |  |  |

Now that you have read and analyzed sample thesis statements, it is time to make your own! In the space below, please write a thesis statement about **Brookline High School**. It can take on a favorable or critical tone, so long as your thesis statement possesses the **4** characteristics of a good thesis statement!

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Feedback from partner:

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| **WEAK** | **SO-SO** | **STRONG** | **WHY?** |
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