

# Thesis Statements: 5 Problems to Avoid

## I. Weak thesis statements:

- Make no claim
- Are obviously true or a statement of fact
- Restate conventional wisdom
- Offer personal conviction as the basis for the claim
- Make an overly broad claim.

### A. WEAK THESIS 1 – The thesis that makes no claim

Incorrect Example:

a) I'm going to write about Darwin's concerns with evolution in *The Origin of Species*.

**Solution:** raise specific issues for the essay to explore.

a) Darwin's concern with survival of the fittest in *The Origin of Species* leads him to neglect a potentially conflicting aspect of his theory of evolution—survival as a matter of interdependence.

### B. WEAK THESIS 2 – Obviously true or statement of fact

Incorrect Example

a) The jean industry targets its advertisements to appeal to young adults.

**Solution:** Find some avenue of inquiry—a question about the facts or an issue raised by them. Make an assertion with which it would be possible for readers to disagree.

Solution example:

a) By inventing new terms, such as “loose fit” and “relaxed fit,” the jean industry has attempted to normalize, even glorify, its product for an older and fatter generation.

### C. WEAK THESIS 3 – Restates conventional wisdom

Incorrect Example

a) From cartoons in the morning to adventure shows at night, there is too much violence on television.

**Solution:** See more than one point of view on your subject. Avoid conventional wisdom unless you can qualify it or introduce new perspectives on it.

Solution Sample:

- a) It is the parents' job to raise their children, not television executives; if parents don't like what's on T.V., all they have to do is turn it off.

#### **D. WEAK THESIS 4 – Offers personal conviction as the basis for the claim.**

Incorrect Example:

a) Any individual, if he looks deeply enough into his soul, knows what is right and what is wrong, and the environment should be protected because it is the right thing to do, not because someone is forcing you to do it.

*Solution:* Replace opinions with ideas and facts.

Solution example:

a) Environmentalists and business should work together to ensure the ecological future of the world; both groups will benefit financially and in their quality of life.

#### **E. WEAK THESIS 5 – Makes overly broad claim**

Examples:

a) Violent revolutions have had both positive and negative results.

***Solution:* Convert broad categories and generic (fits anything) claims to more specific assertions; find ways to bring out the complexity of your subject.**

Solution Example

a) Although violent revolutions begin to redress long-standing social inequities, they often do so at the cost of long-term economic dysfunction and the suffering that attends it.

From Rosenwasser, David and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, 2nd Ed., Harcourt College Publishers, 2000.