


1. A good argumentative thesis is focused and not too broad.

It's important to stay focused! Don't try to argue an overly broad topic in your essay, or you're going to feel confused and unsure about your direction and purpose.

 **Don't write:**

"Eating fast food is bad and should be avoided."

This statement is too general and would be nearly impossible for you to defend. It leaves a lot of big questions to answer. Is all fast food bad? Why is it bad? Who should avoid it? Why should anyone care?

 **Do write:**

"Americans should eliminate the regular consumption of fast food because a fast food diet leads to preventable and expensive health issues, such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease."

In this example, I've [narrowed my argument](#) to the health consequences related to a diet of [fast food](#). I've also chosen to focus on Americans rather than everyone in the universe.

2. A good argumentative thesis is centered on a *debatable* topic.

Back in the '80s, teens loved to say "*that's debatable*" about claims they didn't agree with (such as "*you should clean your room*" and "*you shouldn't go to that movie*").

This age-old, neon-colored, bangle-wearing, peg-legged wisdom holds true today—in your thesis statement.



Don't write:

"There are high numbers of homeless people living in Berkeley, California."

No one can argue for *or* against this statement. It's not debatable. It's just a fact.

An argument over this non-debatable statement would go something like this:

"There are lots of homeless people in Berkeley."

“Yes, there sure are a bunch of them out there.”

“Yup.”

As you can see, that’s not much of an argument.



Do write:

“Homeless people in Berkeley should be given access to services—such as regular food donations, public restrooms, and camping facilities—because it would improve life for all inhabitants of the city.”

Now *that’s debatable*.

Opponents could also easily argue that homeless people in Berkeley already receive adequate services (“*just look at all those luxurious sidewalks!*”) or perhaps that they shouldn’t be entitled to services at all (“*get a job, ya lazy loafers!*”).

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3. A good argumentative thesis picks a side.

Picking a side is pretty much the whole entire point of an argumentative essay. Just as you can’t root for both the Yankees and the Mets, you can’t argue both sides of a topic in your thesis statement.

Learn more about the importance of picking sides by reading the post [The Secrets of a Strong Argumentative Essay](#).



Don’t write:

“Secondhand smoke is bad and can cause heart disease and cancer; therefore, smoking should be outlawed in public places, but outlawing smoking is unfair to smokers so maybe non-smokers can just hold their breath or wear masks around smokers instead.”

A wishy-washy statement like this will make your reader scratch his head in puzzlement. Are you for smoking laws or against them? Yankees or Mets? Mets or Yankees?

[Pick a side](#), and stick with it!

Then stick up for it.



Do write:

“Secondhand smoke is just as harmful as smoking and leads to a higher prevalence of cancer and heart disease; therefore, smoking in any public place should be banned.”

4. A good thesis makes claims that will be supported later in the paper.

Don't write:

"Humans should relocate to Mars."

This statement doesn't include any supporting claims. Why should humans move to Mars? What are the benefits of moving to a planet without oxygen or trees?



Do write:

"It is too late to save earth; therefore, humans should immediately set a date for their relocation to Mars, where they can, with proper planning, avoid issues of famine, war, and global warming."

This statement includes some thought-provoking claims. The reader will wonder how the author plans to defend them. (*"Famine, war, and global warming can be easily avoided on Mars? Go on..."*)

Write your thesis statement here
