

Thesis Statement Checklist

Quick Reference Guide • PaperYak.com

What Makes a Strong Thesis? (The 5 S's)

✓ SPECIFIC

Clear, focused claim — not vague or too broad

■ *'Climate change is bad'* → ■ *'Carbon pricing is the most effective policy tool for reducing emissions'*

✓ SINGLE

One main argument, not multiple disconnected points

■ *'This essay discusses history and also politics'* → ■ *'Economic inequality drives political polarisation'*

✓ SUPPORTED

Can be backed up with evidence

■ *'Shakespeare is the best writer'* → ■ *'Hamlet's soliloquies reveal psychological complexity unprecedented in Elizabethan drama'*

✓ SURPRISING

Not obvious — makes an argument, not a fact

■ *'Social media exists'* → ■ *'Social media amplifies rather than creates political polarisation'*

✓ SOPHISTICATED

Acknowledges complexity, not simplistic

■ *'Technology is good'* → ■ *'AI offers efficiency gains but threatens labour market stability'*

Common Weak Thesis Patterns (Fix These!)

The "announcement" thesis:

■ *'This essay will discuss...'* → ■ Just state your argument directly

The "list" thesis:

■ *'There are three types of...'* → ■ Make an argument about the types, don't just list them

The "question" thesis:

■ *'Is climate change real?'* → ■ Answer the question with your argument

The "fact" thesis:

■ *'The UK left the EU in 2020'* → ■ Make a debatable claim, not a statement of fact

The "obvious" thesis:

■ *'Pollution is bad for the environment'* → ■ Take a position on a debatable aspect

■ The Thesis Fix-It Framework

If your thesis is too broad or vague, ask yourself:

1. What SPECIFICALLY am I arguing? (Narrow your scope)
2. WHY is this claim true? (Identify your reasoning)
3. SO WHAT? (What's the significance or implication?)
4. WHO would DISAGREE with me? (Make it debatable)

Example transformation: