

Unit 12 - Thesis Development II - Revise/Add/Edit

As students work through the research process, delving deeper into their source material and their understanding of their topic will deepen as well. At this point, students should stop to reflect upon their working thesis and ask whether and to what degree it needs to change. Revising the thesis statement is a sign of an engaged scholar.

Every historian goes through this process. First draft thesis statements often

1. Don't argue a point/don't have an argument
2. Are too vague
3. Are too broad
4. Are a statement of fact and are NOT an **argument**

How does a student break through this and develop a stronger thesis? Grilling it! Ask questions of their thesis. As our friends at the University of North Carolina¹ write:

When reviewing your first draft and its working thesis, ask yourself

- **Did I answer the question?** Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question. If the prompt isn't phrased as a question, try to rephrase it. For example, "Discuss the effect of X on Y" can be rephrased as "What is the effect of X on Y?"
- **Have I taken a position...do I have a point/do I have an argument to make?** If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- **Is my thesis statement specific enough?** Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"?
- **Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test?** If a reader/judge's first response is likely to be "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- **Does my project support my thesis specifically and without wandering?** If your thesis and the body of your storyboard do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. **It's okay to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of your research.** Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.

¹ The Writing Center, University of North Carolina. "Thesis Statements." <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/thesis-statements/>. Accessed 29 June 2021.

- **Does my thesis pass the “how and why?” test?** If a reader’s first response is “how?” or “why?” your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

One of the best introductions to thesis development is [“What’s Your Point?”](#) a video produced by Minnesota History Day. Take a look!!!