



Build a Great Argumentative Thesis

Not all arguments end poorly. The best ones can make a real change in the world, not through shouting or intimidation but through reasons and evidence. That's your goal when writing an argument—to convince your reader to agree with your point of view and perhaps even take action.

A crucial building block of an argument is a strong thesis statement.

A **thesis statement** expresses your main opinion or claim about your topic—it is the *big idea* you want your readers to agree with. Most thesis statements are one or two sentences and appear in the beginning part of the argument.

How can I create a strong thesis?

Follow these steps to develop and refine your thesis.

Step 1: Choose a topic.

Your Turn Fill in the table with topics about your school, home, community, and world. Review your list and choose a topic you strongly want to promote or change. If you are still struggling to find a topic, consider selecting from [this choice board](#).

	Home	School	Community	World
Something I Appreciate				
Something That Bothers Me				

Step 2: Form an opinion.

An **opinion** is a personal view or belief. A good opinion is based on facts, but it is not a fact itself. **Facts** are statements that can be checked or proven to be true:

Fact: *Green leafy vegetables contain vitamins C and K as well as iron and calcium.*

Opinion: *Americans should replace meat with green leafy vegetables.*

A good argument expresses a *debatable* opinion. There is little point in arguing for something most people already agree on: *Americans should eat healthy foods.*

Most opinions fall into three categories:

- **Value claim** (*the goodness or badness of something*)

Taking away the most potent symbol of playtime and joy and being a kid, the bona fide snow day, is unacceptable. (Read this argument.)



- **Policy claim** (*what should be done*)
Schools should give students the day off during inclement weather, even if virtual learning options are available.
- **Truth claim** (*a belief you hope to prove*)
In the middle of a demanding school year, a day off for creative exploration and play will benefit both students and teachers.

Your Turn What feeling or belief do you have about your topic? Create two types of claims about your topic.

1.

2.

Step 3: Create an initial thesis statement.

Your Turn Choose your favorite claim from step 2. Organize it into a thesis statement by filling in the table that follows.

Topic	+	Opinion	=	Thesis Statement

Examples

- Topic: [organic food](#)
- Opinion: [should be eaten by more people](#)
- Thesis Statement: [More people should eat organic food.](#)



Writer's Tip: Thesis statements in argumentative writing often include a helping verb: *should, should not, need, must, ought to, could, would, will.*

Step 4: Research and refine your thesis.

Argumentative thesis statements should be based on *informed* opinions. Research your topic and be open to changing your initial thesis based on what you learn.

For example, the student writing about organic food realized her original thesis was too broad. When reading more about the topic, she discovered specific problems preventing people from eating organic food. She used the information to refine her thesis.

Refined thesis: [We must create programs to make organic food more available in low-income areas.](#)

Your Turn Research your topic. Then refine your statement based on your updated thinking.

Refined thesis:

Step 5: Introduce your reasoning.

A strong thesis statement expresses an informed opinion **and** hints at *why* the opinion is necessary or correct. To strengthen your thesis statement, you need to gather **reasons** to support your opinion and integrate one or more of the reasons into your thesis.

The student writing about organic food listed the following reasons to support her thesis.

- *Reason 1:* Low-income populations often lack access to fresh food.
- *Reason 2:* Organic food is fresh and healthy, but also expensive.
- *Reason 3:* Health disparities between rich and poor are linked to diet and nutrition.
- *Updated thesis:* To lessen health disparities and improve nutrition, we must create programs to make organic food more affordable and accessible in low-income areas.

Your Turn Gather the top three reasons to support your thesis. Incorporate one or more of the reasons into your thesis. Note: This step may require extra research.

1. *Reason 1:*
2. *Reason 2:*
3. *Reason 3:*
4. *Updated thesis:*



Writer's Tip: Check out how the author of "[Why Kyle Lowry Is the Greatest Toronto Raptor of All Time](#)" integrates reasons into his thesis (underlined).

Kawhi Leonard was the best single-season player, DeMar DeRozan sits atop some of the key all-time stat tallies, and Vince Carter has taken Canadian basketball to a place it likely never would have gotten to without him. But when you add all those things up—skill, longevity, impact—it's hard to look past Kyle Lowry as the greatest Toronto Raptor.

Step 6: Replace general nouns and bland verbs.

Choose precise nouns and powerful verbs.

- General noun: people
- Precise noun: United States government
- Bland verb: help, support
- Powerful verb: eliminate, subsidize

Revised thesis: To **eliminate** health disparities and improve nutrition, **the United States government** must **subsidize** programs to make organic food more affordable and accessible in low-income areas.

Your Turn Check your nouns and verbs.

1. Replace general nouns with more specific ones.
2. Replace bland verbs with more energetic ones. Consider these powerful replacements.

Powerful Verbs			
abolish adopt align avoid change commit create	eliminate emphasize establish examine implement improve increase	leverage mobilize prevent raise reassess reconsider reduce	renew resist save stimulate stop subsidize transform

Write your final thesis:



Writer's Tip: Your thesis statement makes a promise to your reader: *This is what my writing will prove.* When revising your first draft, make sure it fulfills the promises made in your thesis. If it does not, adjust your supporting reasons and evidence to more closely align with your thesis.