**Thesis Statements: “What’s the point?”**

* When we read articles or essays, we expect the author to have a *point, a central idea* that he or she wants readers to accept.
  + We expect that idea to *determine the content of the work*—so that *everything relates to it*—and we expect the content in turn to *demonstrate/prove the idea*.
  + This main idea is the **thesis statement**.
* A thesis is distinct (different) from the subject of an essay. The subject is what an essay is about; the thesis captures a writer’s unique understanding of or opinion on that subject.
  + *Subject:* Homelessness
  + **Thesis:** One homeless man’s quiet dignity should serve as a model for how the rest of us go about our lives.
* To move from a general subject to a workable thesis for your own writing, keep *narrowing your focus until you have something to say* about a subject.
  + Narrowing of focus:
    - Family—too broad
    - Adoptive families—too broad
    - Adopted children who try to contact their birth parents—too broad
    - How adoptees can locate the necessary information—too broad
    - How legal and other barriers can impede adoptees’ efforts to find their birth parents—*ideal degree of specificity*
  + In your upcoming work, you will identify a topic/subject that interests you and then form a research question about said topic. In pursuing research/finding sources to answer that question, you will find the information necessary to help you construct your thesis.
    - Essentially, your **thesis statement will answer your research question in a strong and specific way**. The remainder of your paper will provide evidence to support your thesis.
* The thesis statement will be a *claim* that makes your *point about the subject*.
  + It will reflect your *purpose* in writing the essay.
  + It will *focus* your readers on *a single point*.
  + It will *tie together* all of the other ideas and details in your essay.
  + Be sure to go beyond general statements and facts to express a point that can be *argued/your informed opinion* on the subject.
    - *General Statement:* Homelessness is a serious problem in America.
      * This offers an opinion, but it’s a broad claim that few would dispute, so it will fail to capture the interest of your audience and to make a significant point.
    - *Statement of Fact:* Some homeless people avoid staying in temporary shelters.
      * This is not a main idea from which an essay can be developed.
    - **Effective Thesis:** For homeless people in America today, there are no good choices.
      * This makes a *strong claim about a narrow subject* and gives readers an idea of *what to expect from the rest of the essay*.
  + As you draft, you can modify your thesis statement to fit the specific focus of your paper as your writing evolves.
    - *First Draft:* Adopted children can contact their birth parents, although sometimes the process is difficult.
    - *Second Draft:* Adopted children often need persistence to locate information about their birth parents.
      * These identify the *subject* of the essay, but they are *not specific enough* about the writer’s interest/focus, which is the barriers to obtaining information.
    - **Final Draft/Best Thesis**: Laws and traditions unfairly block adopted children from seeking information about their birth parents.
      * This sentence makes a *definitive assertion*, which is crucial to a strong thesis. It also clearly conveys a persuasive purpose. Thus, the sentence *lets readers know what to expect*: an argument that adopted children should be treated more fairly when they seek information about their birth parents.
  + Ideally, your thesis statement will be placed in the last sentence (or two, if your thesis takes up more than a sentence) in your introductory paragraph.

**Organizing Your Paper**

* Your paper will need to have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
  + The **introduction** draws readers into the essay and focuses their attention on the main idea and purpose, which is stated in the last sentence as your thesis.
  + The **conclusion** ties together the parts of the essay and provides a final impression for readers to take away with them.
  + The **body**, which comes in between the introduction and conclusion, is the most substantial and longest part of the essay. It develops the main idea or thesis.
* As you explore your *subject*, you will generate *ideas that directly support your thesis* and come up with more specific examples, details, and other *evidence to support these ideas*.
* When you create a plan for your ideas, first identify your **reasons**, *the main supports for your thesis*. Use these as your starting points to work out your essay one section/paragraph at a time.
  + *Thesis:* For homeless people in America today, there are no good choices.
    - **Reason:** A “good choice” is one made from a variety of options determined and narrowed down by the chooser.
    - **Reason:** Homeless people do not necessarily choose to live on the streets.
    - **Reason:** The streets are the only alternative to shelters, which are dangerous and dehumanizing.
      * Each reason could serve as the basis for the *topic sentence of a body paragraph.*
      * Each reason can be *developed in a paragraph using specific evidence to support it*.
      * In essence, the paragraphs are *like mini-essays with their own main ideas and support*.
* Each body paragraph should follow the **TIQAC structure**:
  + The first sentence should be your **topic sentence**, which functions as the *“thesis” for the body paragraph*.
    - This topic sentence will likely *express one of the “reasons”* mentioned above.
  + Next, **introduce** your evidence. This is where you provide a *smooth transition to the facts you will include to support* the topic sentence claim.
  + Then, you can include your **evidence**.
    - Evidence is the *facts or details that serve as proof* for your point(s).
    - You will find this through your *research of credible sources*.
    - You may include a *quotation (full or partial)*, or you *may paraphrase*, but you **must always cite your information with a parenthetical citation**.
      * (There must be a *Works Cited entry* to correspond with your parenthetical citation, too.)
  + Once you’ve given your evidence, you must **analyze** it.
    - This **commentary/analysis** section is the most crucial point of the paragraph. You must use multiple sentences to *interpret and explain how/why the evidence supports your claim* in the paragraph and the overall claim/thesis.
  + Lastly, you will **conclude** your paragraph in a sentence or so, tying up any loose ends and potentially starting a transition into your next body paragraph.
* Each body paragraph should help unify your entire paper:
  + **Unity** in a piece of writing means that *all of its parts are related*.
    - The **sentences** build the *central idea of their paragraph*.
    - The **paragraphs** build the *central idea of the whole essay*.

**Other General Guidelines**

* Do not use personal pronouns (I/we/you/my/your/etc.) and contractions (don’t, can’t, won’t, wouldn’t, couldn’t, shouldn’t, etc.).
* Do not use “gonna,” “wanna,” and other words that are not actually words. Text-speak and abbreviations are also to be avoided.