A Proper Thesis Statement: don’t leave home without it.



While this comic is absolutely hilarious, please do not try to follow Calvin’s advice. Instead, your writing should have strong concrete details, insightful commentary, and above all else, a clear and sophisticated position. In order to accomplish this, you must have an excellent thesis to give your essay some direction.

***A strong thesis statement:***

* takes some sort of stand
* justifies discussion
* expresses one main idea
* is specific

***Do I answer the question?***Re-reading the question/prompt after constructing a working thesis can help fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.

***Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?***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’s first response is, “So what?” then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.

***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.

***Does my thesis make a “positive” statement rather than a “negative” statement?***Remember, your essay is an argument. You do not want to say what something “is not” or “does not” because the only way you can prove that is by saying something “is” or something “does.”