The thesis statement concisely expresses your main idea to your audience and is proved and supported by the body of the essay. Your thesis statement should do more than state a fact; rather, it should make an assertion based on your own ideas.

Bad: iPods are devices that transport and play music.  
Good: iPods are the best source for transporting and playing music not only because they are compact and user-friendly but also because they store large amounts of music.

**KINDS OF THESIS STATEMENTS**

1. The enumerative thesis (a.k.a. “three-point” thesis¹) lists the evidence that supports your primary argument. Each body paragraph discusses one piece of evidence.
   
   **Example:** The writers of *The Family Guy* use irreverent humor to satirize pop culture, comment on the stereotypical American family, and explore controversial themes.

2. The umbrella thesis encompasses the entire argument in a concise statement without naming each piece of evidence that the author plans to use.
   
   **Example:** The irreverent humor used in *The Family Guy* is not simply for shock value; the writers are commenting on much deeper societal issues.

**HOW TO DEVELOP A THESIS STATEMENT**

Think deeper! After writing a thesis statement, ask yourself, “So what?”

**Example:** *The Family Guy* is a humorous television show.  
**Revision:** *The Family Guy* is entertaining because of its controversial humor.  
**Revision:** The irreverent humor used in *The Family Guy* is not simply for shock value; the writers are exploring much deeper societal issues.

**SOME WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR THESIS**

**Say why:** For many student writers, procrastination is based on fear; this fear keeps students from improving their writing because they do not take the time to fully develop their ideas.

**Say why your audience should care:** Students should understand that worrying about grammar and spelling too early in the writing process will actually lead to a poor essay.

**Say how:** English teachers often overwhelm students by giving them too many tasks to think about when writing essays.

**Make specific comparisons:** The key difference between writing in high school and writing in college is that your ideas become more significant and complex; therefore, college freshman have to learn to think critically.

¹ Though three points are commonly used, writers should use as many supporting ideas as they deem necessary.
Make an evaluation: My high school teacher’s insistence on teaching me the five paragraph essay has actually hurt my writing skills.

Consider the consequences: If students do not find ways to think deeper and more critically, they will never learn to fully develop their ideas.

TOPIC SENTENCES
Just as the thesis statement tells the main argument of your essay, topic sentences state the main idea of individual body paragraphs and directly relate to your thesis. Topic sentences provide support for your argument and direction for your reader. Consider the following analogies to help understand the importance of strong topic sentences.

The Solar System Analogy
Just as the sun is the center of the solar system and orbited by the planets, topic sentences revolve around your thesis statement, the center of your argument.

The Roof and Pillar Analogy
The thesis statement covers the overall argument/primary point of the paper and is supported by the topic sentences, which give the main points and evidence of the paper.