Thesis Statements

A **Thesis Statement** clearly states the topic of a composition. It not only helps focus the main point of the composition by stating what you will PROVE in your paper, but it gives the reader exact understanding of what will be covered. Put another way, a thesis statement declares your own unique perspective, your slant, on the subject. It is extremely important that you know how to write a good thesis statement. If your thesis statement is flawed, then your paper is off to a rough start because I will not know what you are trying to prove, and the content of your paper will suffer greatly.

Rules for effective THESIS STATEMENTS:

L	**LIMIT** yourself to a topic that is not too broad to discuss within the confines of your word/page limit.
A	Your thesis should be **ARGUABLE**, something that you can convince your audience to agree with, not a fact.
M	Your thesis should make a point that is **MEANINGFUL** and worth arguing.
E	Your thesis should be **EXACT**, as precise as possible, so that your reader will clearly understand your purpose.

Examples of Well-Written Thesis Statements:

Gandhi's bravery in the face of extreme opposition improved the civil rights of lower class citizens in India's caste system.
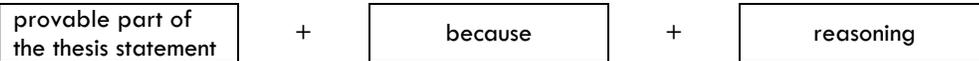
Schadenfreude, a concept developed by the Germans, is a key personality trait of Roger in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

In *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the presence of the strong woman and the ways with which she is dealt by the men around her is influenced by the life of Queen Elizabeth, the relationship she held with her court, and the issues which encompassed her reign.

Topic Sentences

The **Topic Sentences** in an essay should be clearly connected to proving the thesis statement. One way to look at topic sentences is as a "mini thesis" for the paragraph. It is imperative that the topic sentences work together to prove your thesis. Once you have topic sentences, you need to check them to make sure that they work together, stay on topic, and most importantly, prove the thesis.

One way to do this is to use the following formula:

provable part of the thesis statement	+	because	+	reasoning

There are **two main dangers** that you can check for. The **first danger** is that your topic sentences leave out a point or idea that your thesis mentions. In the example below, the topic sentences focus only on the prejudice between Englishmen and Indians and never mention the prejudice in America:

> **Thesis**: In *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forester writes about the prejudice the Englishmen had for the Indians, which is similar to the prejudice existing in America.

> **TS #1**: The relationship between an Englishman and an Indian was not looked upon positively by either race in the prejudiced society of Chandrapore.

> **TS #2**: In Chandrapore, it does not make a difference whether a person is of good moral standing or not; what matters is whether one is English or Indian.

> **TS #3**: All of the important offices and positions in the society were held by Englishmen and never Indians.

The **second danger** is that your topic sentences introduce ideas that your thesis never mentions. In the example below, the third topic sentence introduces a new idea not mentioned in the thesis (flashbacks that reveal themes).

> **Thesis**: *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut focuses on society's glorification, and therefore ignorance, of war.

> **TS #1**: Some characters in the novel are blind and ignorant to war's realities.

> **TS #2**: The characterization of the main character helps to emphasize the brutality of war, and in so doing, serves as a contrast to society's glorification of war.

> **TS #3**: The flashbacks are effective literary devices that help to show the universality of the themes in the book.

** If your topic sentences do not fully prove your thesis, then there is no way that you can do well on a paper. A successful (passing) paper is one that proves its thesis. If your topic sentences aren't planned well, you will end up writing about a bunch of stuff that is not relevant to your thesis or forgetting to prove part of your thesis. Planning is the most important step in writing an essay (even a timed essay)!

MAKE SURE YOU CHECK YOUR TOPIC SENTENCES AGAINST YOUR THESIS!