THE THESIS STATEMENT

The thesis statement limits the scope of the essay. It states either what you already know about the subject or what you can find out about the subject. The scope of the thesis statement should correspond the desired length of the essay.

The thesis itself is an idea, opinion, or conclusion about a particular subject. The thesis statement is that idea, opinion, or conclusion expressed in a complete sentence that contains key words.

The following qualities are characteristics of a good thesis statement:

1. A good thesis statement is best expressed in a declarative sentence--never a question.
   
   Poor:  
   *Is the registration process at DeKalb College satisfactory?*  
   (Opinion missing)

   Better:  
   *The registration process at DeKalb College is confusing, frustrating, and exhausting.*  
   (This is now a declarative sentence containing a statement of opinion. Confusing, frustrating, and exhausting are the key words)

2. A good thesis statement is clear.
   
   Poor:  
   *Dewey successfully argues that the three most important lessons a child should learn are to sing, to read, and he should also be able to draw.*  
   (Ambiguous, not parallel, requires a second reading)

   Better:  
   *Dewey successfully argues that the most important lessons for a child are singing, reading, and drawing.*  
   (precise and parallel)

3. A good thesis statement focuses on a specific, narrow aspect of the topic.
   
   Poor:  
   *The Bible is read by many people.*  
   (Vague and too general)

   Better:  
   *The Bible provides historical and geographical assistance to certain archaeologists.*  
   (Clear and specific)
4. A good thesis statement provides facts that are not overly obvious to the reader.

   Poor:  **Good nutrition is important.** (A fact everyone knows)

   Better: **Poor nutrition causes serious dental problems among the Indians of New Mexico.** (A lesser-known fact)

5. A good thesis statement can be defined by reason rather than emotion.

   Poor:  **Mexican food is revolting.** (Too emotional)

   Better: **Mexicans prepare some high-seasoned dishes which many Americans find indigestible.** (More fact based)