Thesis Statements

Your thesis statement should tell the reader exactly what your paper is about. It comes at the end of your opening paragraph. A thesis statement can be thought of as your paper’s road map; it shows the reader what to expect in the rest of the paper. Your thesis statement may require revision if you change, add, or delete any of your original ideas after you begin writing. A good thesis statement makes one strong and specific claim.

Consider the following assignment and thesis statements.

Assignment: Discuss the potential implications of the SEC’s new 21st Century Disclosure Initiative. You should discuss potential implications of the initiative for investors and for public companies.

Weak thesis statement: “There are some positive and negative implications of the new initiative in question.”

This thesis is too vague and does not make a strong claim.

Strong thesis statement: “The most far-reaching potential implication of the SEC’s 21st Century Disclosure Initiative is the presentation of relevant disclosure information in a uniform format, which will facilitate more informed decision-making for both investors and public companies.”

The reader knows that the writer believes the initiative will have positive implications for both investors and public companies. The reader also knows the basis on which the writer makes the claim (relevant information in a uniform format leads to better investment decisions).

Weak thesis statement: “The SEC’s 21st Century Disclosure Initiative has important implications for investors, while the SEC’s Plain English Initiative more directly impacts public companies.”

The reader doesn’t know which of the SEC’s initiatives the paper will be about.

Strong thesis statement: “Because relevant disclosure information is crucial to making sound investment decisions, the SEC’s 21st Century Disclosure Initiative is more likely to have a significant impact on investors than on public companies.”

The reader knows the paper will discuss the initiative’s impact on investors and will present evidence that the impact of the initiative on public companies is relatively insignificant.