

SLAC WRITING AID

DEVELOPING THE TOPIC OR CONTROLLING STATEMENT

The controlling statement merely introduces the topic of the composition. The controlling statement may be introduced in three different ways depending on whether you are asked to write a narrative, a descriptive, an expository, or an argumentative composition.

THE CENTRAL IDEA STATEMENT

The central idea statement simply introduces the topic, usually by means of a simple sentence. Some examples are:

- (1) Smoking is dangerous to your health.
- (2) Cheeseburgers are nutritious.
- (3) My uncle is the most unforgettable character I have ever met.

This way of introducing the topic works very well for narrative and descriptive and descriptive compositions.

THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A second way of introducing the topic is by using a statement of purpose. The statement of purpose always contains, or starts with, an infinitive. Some examples for each type of composition are:

- (1) I am going to discuss the causes of the American Revolution.
- (2) I am going to offer an alternative explanation for the cause of the American Civil War.
- (3) I am going to describe my scuba-diving trip to Cancun.
- (4) I am going to explain how to change a flat tire.
- (5) In this paper I shall argue (*grammatically equivalent to "I am going to argue"*) that hedonism is a
is a morally bankrupt ethical theory

As exhibited by the examples above, the statement of purpose can be used to introduce the subject in all four of the major types of composition.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

The phrase “thesis statement” is currently used to denote a very special way of introducing the topic. An adequate thesis statement accomplishes four things. It (a) states a limited idea, (b) states a point of view or expresses an attitude toward the limited idea, and (c) restricts the discussion while (d) establishing the major areas of discussion. An example, with the four elements identified, is:

Table top photography is expensive because of the necessary financial investment in

(a)

(b)

(c)

cameras, special equipment, and supplies.

(d)

The thesis statement, when written correctly, actually provides a one sentence summary (or outline) of everything that is to follow. As you can see, the thesis statement is especially suitable to the argumentative or persuasive essay.

Adapted from Developing the Writing-Intensive Class

Created by Prof. John Igo and Richard Oliver

Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC),

San Antonio College

Retyped: Melinda Gandaria (June 2012)