

WRITING WITH DAVE
TALK SHOW SET

HOW TO WRITE A STRONG THESIS

SHOT 1

Crane from Grid Trak

Music plays

Onscreen title appears: Writing With Dave

David sitting on stool, looking at copy. As camera moves in, just before camera stops moving, he looks up from copy and says:

Hi, everyone. Welcome to this edition of Writing with Dave. [STANDS] And I have an important question for you:

What the heck is a thesis statement?

Statement--Sounds vaguely criminal, doesn't it? Like a deposition to the police or something.

Thesis--sounds maybe scientific. Is it like a hypothesis?

[BEGIN MANUAL ZOOM]

Well, whatever you call it--thesis, main idea, controlling idea, central point--you've got to have one. For the same reason that a wheel has to have a hub or the spokes fall off.

Your writing must have that core concept around which everything else revolves and attaches to---or it falls apart very quickly.

SHOT 2-3

Voiceover PowerPoint

Not an Ultra shot, but a powerpoint that will begin to play.

Let's review a simple formula for writing a thesis. It goes like this:

Topic plus your opinion on that topic equals your thesis.

Here's an example:

Let's say your topic is Prison Overcrowding.

After thinking about and studying the topic, you've arrived at an opinion about it: Prison overcrowding is--

[animate] a national shame

Now, put those two together in one sentence and you have a thesis:

[animate] Prison overcrowding in America is a national shame.

--

It's as simple as that.

A thesis is simply your topic combined with the point you wish to make about that topic.

Whether you call that point your opinion, main idea, slant, belief, hypothesis, position, or any of a number of other synonyms for the same thing--

what you really want to say overall about the topic.

SHOT 4

CAM B WIDE

[first looking down at notes, then looking up to talk to fake camera off center to my left]

Well, that was relief, wasn't it? A thesis is not a crime or a science experiment. It's simply what you want to say about a topic.

[turn 90 right]

--

SHOT 5

CAM A WIDE

[face my left wall. camera rolls. turn 90 right to face camera. have arms, hands and script in exact same position as shot before for continuity]

Now that you have this thesis sentence or whatever you call it, you can use it to blueprint what you are about to write.

A key insight about thesis statements is that--if done well--they give a blueprint or roadmap to the content you need.

[david begins turn to right 45 to monitor]

Let's take a look at this feature and apply it to some common examples you might encounter in school.

Shot 6

Voice Over PPT

Let's begin with the topic already presented:

Prison overcrowding

Our opinion was: a national shame

We combined those into a sentence to create our thesis:

Prison overcrowding in America is a national shame.

Now that thesis clearly predicts what must follow in the essay. The writer will have to talk about:

Shameful fact #1
and
Shameful fact #2
and
Shameful fact #3

in order to justify the thesis--prison overcrowding is a national shame.

The writer really has very little choice. There may be more than three shameful facts about prison overcrowding, maybe fewer. That's depends on length of the assignment.

Here's another important point:

If you alter the thesis, the road map changes. For example, let's change our thesis to this:

The *reasons* for prison overcrowding in America are shameful.

Again, the writer has little choice. In the essay must be:

Shameful reason for overcrowding #1

Then
Shameful reason for overcrowding #2

And Shameful reason for overcrowding #3. Or however many are required.

Shot 7

[manual zoom]

So, once you have that solid thesis, you also have a clear roadmap to the rest of your writing.

[turn right and walk to face camera--remember position of hands]

Shot 8

[shot begins with two steps from left on 45-angle toward camera, ending front center]

[this speech needs to be 7-8 seconds long)

This thesis-as-roadmap strategy can be used with a variety of topics you encounter in school. Let's take a look at a few of these from various subjects that you will likely write essays in.

Shot 9
Medium Shot
Cam B OTS

Our first topic could come from a history, economics or sociology course, and is often encountered in the health care field:

[turn three quarters to screen]
Here is our Topic: America's aging population
Here is our slant: problems with social security programs

Combine those two and we have a thesis:
America's aging population will soon cause problems in social security programs.

[zoom to full screen] as this is being said]
Now, based on this thesis, what *must* be in this essay in order to prove, illustrate, or corroborate that thesis?

Shot 10
VO PPT

Clearly, there will have to be a discussion of

Social security problem #1 that will be caused by the aging population
Social security problem #2
Social security problem #3
and so on.

Next, here's a possible topic from a business, biology or even political science course:

Industrial Pollution

The slant for your writing could be:
increased penalties for polluters

Now, Put those two together into a thesis statement:

Increased penalties are needed for America's industrial polluters.

Clearly, this essay will have to present evidence to justify the call for increased penalties:

Justification #1 for increased penalties
Justification #2 for increased penalties
Justification #3 for increased penalties

Shot 11

[turning from 160 position with back/side to camera]

So, as you see, this whatever you call it--thesis sentence, thesis statement, main idea, unifying idea, controlling idea, slant--whatever--

it **is** the hub in the wheel of your essay
[play turning wheel in background]

Make that thesis solid, and you will roll right through the writing.

That's a promise, and that's today's edition of *Composing with David*.

So long.

[walk off stage left]