



DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Choosing Topic and Thesis

- Choose a topic of personal interest. A writer can better defend a topic that he or she understands and enjoys than a topic he or she is apathetic towards. Try to avoid a topic that is too personal, though; this brings up the danger of letting emotions fuel the argument.
- The author should choose something he or she is well-informed about (or be willing to conduct the necessary research).
- The topic must be specific enough to be covered thoroughly within the length restraints of the assignment. A single aspect of an issue may need to be chosen if the topic is too broad.
- One should be open-minded about the topic and willing to change his or her thesis if it is insufficient.
- Try to choose a topic that can be approached with some degree of objectivity. Remember, be willing to consider both sides of an issue; understanding the opposing viewpoint will strengthen the argument.
- In choosing a topic, keep the **purpose** in mind:
 - What is the goal?
 - What response should the paper get from the audience?
 - Is the purpose too idealistic?
- Remember to analyze the **audience**:
 - What beliefs or opinions is the audience likely to hold?
 - Will their response to the position likely be neutral, favorable, or hostile?
 - Will the author be able to defend his or her position convincingly and logically to the particular audience?
 - If a controversial topic is chosen, assume that the opposition will be well-informed and looking for weaknesses in the proposed argument.

Taking a Stand: Formulating a Thesis

The thesis for an argumentation paper is a clear statement of the position that is being defended or refuted. Each aspect of the thesis should be supported persuasively and logically by using specific evidence.

Once a topic is chosen and a thesis has been stated, examine it to make sure it is *debatable*.

- Do not make the thesis a statement of fact or one that is self-evident (one that most people agree on automatically). For example, it would be pointless to argue that racism is an evil that should not be tolerated in a democratic society. A more viable thesis might argue that a certain government policy is racist and, therefore, should not be tolerated.
- Test the thesis to see if it is *debatable* by trying to formulate an **antithesis**, a statement that supports the opposite position.

For example:

Thesis:

Because minorities have suffered outright discrimination in past educational systems, university admission policies should still employ affirmative action quotas.

Antithesis:

Even though minorities have suffered outright discrimination in past educational systems, university admission policies should no longer employ affirmative action quotas because it threatens the integrity of the admissions process.