

# Working Thesis & Outline

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Teen Essay Guide

## Step 1 - Create a working thesis

- At this stage it can be a very simple or formulaic thesis. The objective at this point is to have a one sentence claim to direct the research. Revising and refining the thesis into a more sophisticated version can happen in the revision process or once the research is complete. Students may find things in their research that help refine the thesis statement, making it more nuanced and interesting. So for now we're just going with **a very basic thesis statement**. "Participation trophies are bad for kids." or "We should have paper ballots as back ups." are perfectly fine for now. Yes, a very simple thesis is enough *to get them started with a research direction*.
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## Step 2 - Getting Ready to Research Graphic Organizers

Download the [free graphic organizers](#)

Now that you've analyzed the freewrite & have a working thesis, it's time to figure out where the student needs to go with their research. One legitimate complaint my teens had was the research stage felt too open-ended. They weren't sure where to look, how to start, what they needed to look for specifically, and their search terms left them with an overwhelming amount of results to sort through. It also took too darn long!

It *is* overwhelming to release them onto the internet with a "now go research your topic." We don't want our student to get bogged down sorting through vague search results. Instead, we want to make better use of their research time. Otherwise the research stage can drag on and take too much energy out of the process.

- Use [getting ready to research](#) for the student to continue reviewing their freewrite. See the directions on the teen page. Here's [the creator's blog post](#) on how she uses them.
- Don't worry if they struggle to fill in all of the graphic organizers. Have them do what they can independently. Once everyone has finished the freewrite analysis (both parent and student), you guys will get together and see if the two of you can fill in any more.
  - Page 3 was useful for my teens to get clear on what *they* are interested in on the topic.
  - Page 4 was helpful for seeing the holes in their knowledge and directing where they need to research. We printed this page for each of the 3 points needed in a thesis.

- This helped brainstorm and/or organize particulars (supporting evidence) to support the points and direct research for that point.
  - We skipped page 5, although you could jot down their working thesis and which points they want to explore/research.
  - Page 6 was very useful for narrowing the search terms so they get more precise search results, making it less overwhelming to wade through online information.
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### Step 3 - Create a rough outline

“I found the only effective outline to be a list of full assertions - one for each paragraph.”

Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*

- Look over the notes from the freewrite analysis and the getting ready to research organizers, then create a working outline. **For now, see if they can simply list assertions to develop into paragraphs through their research.** The order of assertions isn't important yet. Weak, strong, in the middle. Doesn't matter yet. They'll discover which is which as they research. Right now simply make a list of assertions.
- This *rough* outline (meaning not complete) may help your teen visually see how they're naturally arranging their thoughts on paper & where the "holes" are in their paper that need filling in with research, examples, quotes, etc. Don't worry if there isn't much detail in the outline yet. That's what research is for.
  - Remind student about the minimum number of points & particulars needed for an essay.
  - Now move onto research. See next page.