

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.** How will you stick your neck out on this topic? State that.
 - Refining the thesis into a more sophisticated version will happen in the revision process or once the research is complete. You may find things in your research that help refine the thesis statement, making it more nuanced and interesting.
 - For now we're just going with a **very basic thesis statement.** "Participation trophies are wrong" or "We should have paper ballots as back ups." are perfectly fine for the time being. Yes, a very simple thesis is enough to **get you started with a research direction.**
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Step 2 - Getting Ready to Research Graphic Organizers

[Download free graphic organizers](#)

Now that you've analyzed your freewrite & have a working thesis, it's time to figure out where to go with your research.

It's overwhelming to simply go onto the internet with vague search terms. You don't want to get bogged down sorting through too many search results. Instead, make more efficient use of your research time and avoid dragging out this stage.

Pages 4 & 6 of the graphic organizers help rein in the internet search by writing down search terms & phrases ahead of research day.

- Fill in the graphic organizers the best you can.
 - Page 3 is useful for **getting clear on what you are interested in about the topic.**
 - Page 4 is helpful for **seeing the holes in your information & directing where you need to research.** Print this page for each of your 3 points in the thesis. This helps brainstorm and/or organize particulars to support your points and direct research for that point.

- You can skip page 5, although you could jot down a working thesis and which points you want to explore/research.
 - Page 6 is **very useful for narrowing the search terms** so you get more precise search results, making it less overwhelming to wade through the 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 you can simply list assertions to develop into paragraphs through your research.** The order of assertions doesn't matter right now. Weak, strong, in the middle. Doesn't matter yet. You'll discover which is which as you research. Right now, simply make a list of assertions. Stick your neck out!
- This *rough* outline (meaning not complete) may help you visually see how you are naturally arranging your thoughts on paper and where the “holes” are in your 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 — to fill it in.