**SSC 2030: Notes on writing & research papers**

**Tips for writing a good thesis:[[1]](#footnote-1)**

A thesis statement:

* tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion;
* is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper;
* makes a claim that others might dispute; and
* is usually a single sentence near the beginning of your paper (most often, at the end of the first paragraph) that presents your argument to your reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

If your assignment asks you to take a position or develop a claim about a subject, you may need to convey that position or claim in a thesis statement near the beginning of your draft. When an assignment asks you to analyze, to interpret, to compare and contrast, to demonstrate cause and effect, or to take a stand on an issue, it is likely that you are being asked to develop a thesis and to support it persuasively.

**Suggestions when writing:**

I’ve noticed that student writing is fluid, to the point and expressive – sometimes passionate – in discussion forums. Sometimes the quality of your writing in more formal writing assignments is more stilted or forced, a bit awkward and your meaning is less clearly expressed. So, you might try writing as if you were responding to a forum post. It might be worth trying the speech to text function of most computers. On my mac I can use a ‘dictate’ tool that turns on a microphone and records my speech. I’m sure most computers have this function and that there are free apps that do the same thing.

Other suggestions:

* Please **proofread** what you’ve written before submitting it.
  + It’s often tough to find mistakes in something you’ve just written, so try putting the piece aside for hours to days and then look at it with fresh eyes.
  + Reading what you’ve written aloud can allow you to hear language that doesn’t sound quite right. Most computers will read text back to you. Try that tool!
* **Be concise.** If a word doesn’t contribute to the meaning or clarity of a sentence, remove it.
* **Be specific.** When using demonstratives (it, that, this, etc.,.) be sure that the reader knows what object they refer to.
* **Simple is often better.** Long, run on sentences and attempts to make writing look complex tend to muddy intent and impact. Think simple and be direct.
* **Take a stand!** When defending a thesis statement or argument, make your point with evidence and persuasive language. Don’t ignore the other side of the argument or contradictory evidence but take a stand.

1. https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/  
    http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/thesis-statements/  
    http://hartness.vsc.edu/vtc/guides/research-basics [↑](#footnote-ref-1)