Crafting a Thesis Statement

What is a thesis statement?
A thesis statement is the central focus of any well-developed piece of work and is designed to present the overarching claim of the essay or speech. The thesis makes a claim and the main ideas serve to support the claim.

The thesis statement should always complete this statement, “By the end of this essay, I want my audience to know ______.”

Getting started:
Knowing your topic and purpose are essential first steps to finding a thesis statement. A good pattern when searching for a thesis could look something like this:

- **Topic:** Alternative Fuel Sources for Vehicles
- **General Purpose:** To inform (options are inform, persuade, or entertain.)
- **Specific Purpose:** I want to inform my audience that several alternatively fueled vehicles are now available to the public.
- **Thesis Statement:** By the Fall of 2010, many automobile manufacturers will offer alternative fuel vehicles.

So, your thesis needs to be argumentative.
The previous example works in the case of an informative essay, but would not be enough to create an effective argumentative essay. In order to create an argumentative essay, your thesis must be debatable. This means that someone could reasonably disagree with it, and you have to prove your point.

- **Non-debatable thesis:** Vehicles that utilize alternative fuel sources are being developed to limit the use of fossil fuels.

This thesis statement is not debatable because it is a statement of fact, and there is no room for disagreement. In order to be debatable, the thesis must make some sort of claim. A stance on the issue that presents an argument must be taken.

- **Debatable thesis:** The production of vehicles that utilize alternative fuel sources is a necessary first step in reducing the use of fossil fuels.

In this example, the phrasing “a necessary first step” leaves the thesis statement open to debate. Someone may feel that the pursuit of alternative fuel sources for vehicles is ultimately ineffective in terms of reducing the use of fossil fuels. You must now provide evidence that backs up your claim. Now, you are beginning to make an argument.
You will also need to narrow the focus of your thesis.

**Extended Thesis:** There are many reasons that fossil fuel usage needs to be reduced, there are many different types of alternative fuel sources being developed, and there are many different ways to reduce fossil fuels.

The topic in this thesis statement covers a lot of ground. In general, you would not have enough space in an essay to give each one of these aspects of the topic the in-depth coverage it would need. The goal is to concentrate on specific elements of the topic so that a narrowed thesis can be established.

**Narrowed thesis:** While there are many reasons for the development of vehicles that utilize alternative fuel sources, the adverse effect of fossil fuels on the environment is the most immediate.

So, narrowing the focus of the thesis statement was achieved by referring back to the previously mentioned aspects of the topic. In this example, the aspect chosen was the reasons that fossil fuel usage needs to be reduced, and, from this, one reason, environmental concerns, was selected as being "the most immediate," which became the argument's claim.

The broad focus of the thesis statement is that the production of alternative fuel source vehicles is necessary. The narrow focus is that such production is necessary specifically because of the adverse effects fossil fuels have on the environment.