

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

PHASE 1: Selecting a Topic and Creating a Thesis

Before assigning a research paper, teachers should first be sure that the purpose of the assignment is clear: Is this meant to be an informative paper? Is the assignment an argumentative or persuasive paper? Selecting a topic for a research paper within the purpose of the assignment can be a daunting task for many students. Without explicit instruction on how to choose an appropriate topic, many students will select one that is either too broad or too narrow. Students will require guidance to identify the difference between a topic and a thesis statement. Teachers also need to provide explicit instruction on formulating an effective thesis statement or argument. To see how to help students move from a paper prompt to a thesis statement, review the sample below:

Assignment:

*Write a focused, thesis driven essay in which you articulate and support an argument **either** for why humans should eat meat **or** why we shouldn't. The paper should be 3-4 pages in length.*

Using the structured topic to the thesis statement sheet can help students move from the prompt to a defined topic to a strong thesis statement.

Structured Topic to Thesis Sheet
Topic: have students generate a statement or phrase that outlines the focus of the assignment.
<i>Human diets</i>
Position or Opinion: have students be sure to clearly state their position on the topic, avoiding question words like "how".
<i>Should work to eliminate meat</i>
Strong Thesis Statement: demonstrate that a strong thesis provides a clear reason for their position. Asking students, "so what?" about their position can help them come to a clear stance.
<i>Human diets should work to eliminate meat because a vegetarian diet and lifestyle protects the safety and dignity of animals.</i>



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Blank Template

Structured Topic to Thesis Sheet

Topic:

Position or Opinion:

Strong Thesis Statement:

