Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is the main point you express, explain, or try to prove in your paper; it should:

Clearly communicate your essay’s main idea:
Tell your readers not only what your essay’s topic is, but how you will approach that topic and what you will say about it. The thesis reflects your essay’s purpose.

Be more than a general subject, a statement of fact, or an announcement of your intent:
The thesis statement should be much more specific than any of these and should act as a road map to your essay for your readers. Include the specific message you want them to take from your paper and lay out an outline for how your paper will develop.

Be carefully worded:
Be direct and forceful. Do not use vague phrases such as centers on, deals with, involves, revolves around, has a lot to do with, or is primarily concerned with, or use overly complex terminology or unnecessary details that may confuse or mislead readers.

Suggest your essay direction, emphasis and scope:
Do not make promises in the thesis statement that you cannot fulfill; instead, suggest how your ideas are related, in what order your major points will be introduced, and where you will place your emphasis.

Examples of solid thesis statements:

“In The Sound and the Fury, Quentin and Caddie are used to contrast the viewpoints of those characters who live in the mind and those who live in the sensual physical world as a way of pointing out that neither of these ways is a totally adequate viewpoint of life.”

“Although opponents of gun control say that it does nothing to fight crime or save lives, requiring a seven-day waiting period before purchasing a gun is necessary to keep guns out of the hands of known criminals; this will make it less likely that a robbery or other crime will result in murder.”

Remember: If the ideas in your paper change, you also need to change your thesis statement!

Note:
For more information, refer to The Prentice Hall Reference Guide by Muriel Harris and Jennifer Kunka.