COMING UP WITH A TENTATIVE THESIS
WHAT IS A THESIS?

• The **thesis statement** is the sentence that states the main idea of a writing assignment and helps to focus the ideas within the paper. It is not just a topic. It often reflects an opinion or judgment that a writer has made about the topic. A good thesis is debatable. Someone could have a different opinion from yours.

• It is helpful to start thinking of possible tentative thesis statements before you start drafting your paper.
THINK OF A QUESTION YOU WANT TO ANSWER ABOUT YOUR TOPIC. THEN TURN YOUR ANSWER INTO A THESIS.

Question: **What should be done to help homeless families?**

Answer: _______________________________________
NARROW YOUR THESIS.

• A good thesis is specific, telling your audience exactly what your essay will cover. A good way to narrow a thesis is to ask and answer questions about it.

  Question: **What are the main causes of homelessness for families and what programs are targeting these main causes to help families?**

  Answer: ____________________________________________________________
QUALIFY YOUR THESIS

- Though you may sometimes want to state your thesis strongly and bluntly, often you need to acknowledge that your opinion or claim might not be unconditionally true. Consider adding words such as *may, often, or very likely* to qualify your statement.
AVOID ANNOUNCING YOUR TOPIC

• **Weak original thesis that announces**: In this paper, I will discuss the best solutions to help homeless veterans.

• **Revised stronger thesis**: Programs to help homeless veterans must receive increased funding to provide services that address mental health issues as well as job skills and training.
AVOID MAKING UNIVERSAL OR PRO/CON JUDGMENTS THAT OVERSIMPLIFY COMPLEX ISSUES. EXPLAIN WHY IN YOUR THESIS. QUALIFY YOUR STATEMENT.

- Original thesis: We must save the whales.
- Revised thesis: Because our planet's health may depend upon biological diversity, we should save the whales.
THE POINT YOU MAKE IN THE PAPER SHOULD MATTER:
BE PREPARED TO ANSWER “SO WHAT?” ABOUT YOUR THESIS STATEMENT.

Compare the following:

• Weak original thesis that does not make a significant statement:
  – There are advantages and disadvantages to GMOs.

• Stronger revised thesis:
  – Although GMOs provide more efficient food production, consumers should be concerned about potential negative effects on biodiversity and the environment.
YOUR THESIS MAY CHANGE AS YOU WRITE

• As you write your draft, you may discover that you have good ideas in your draft that you might want to include in your thesis.
• Continue to revise your thesis as you work on your paper.
• Your tentative thesis is a DRAFT. Try to improve and re-focus your thesis as you work on your paper.