

## 2. THE TWO PARTS OF A THESIS

The thesis—the main argument of an essay boiled down to one sentence—is made up of two essential parts: a single claim and at least one premise.

Let's examine a sample thesis:

*Duct tape is the most ingenious and versatile tool ever invented because it's vital to national security, it's a medical miracle, and it's a fashion statement.*

The claim is the core of the argument. It is what you want your reader to believe by the end of the essay. A claim is an opinion—not a fact. In the case of our sample thesis, the core of the argument is to persuade the reader that duct tape is the most ingenious and versatile tool ever invented.

A premise is a reason that you provide to support your claim. It answers the question "Why is this true?" or "Why should this be done?" In the case of our duct-tape thesis, we have three premises: 1.) It's vital to national security; 2.) It's a medical miracle; and 3.) It's a fashion statement.

The genius of a complete thesis with a claim and premises is that it fulfills the reader's need for a logical foundation as well as a logical roadmap of where the essay is going. With our duct-tape thesis, for example, the reader knows both what we are going to argue in our essay—the final destination so to speak—as well as the stops along the way, which are the premises of the argument.

### Directions

- I. Read the following thesis statements. Underline the premises and write down the number of premises in each thesis.

*We should not ban human cloning research because it could bring about medical solutions for millions of people.*

*Because it may lead to future eugenics, we should ban human-cloning research.*

*Sports benefit your overall health because they relieve stress in your muscles, they work your cardiovascular system, and they provide your brain with needed oxygen.*

*That government is best which governs the least, because its people discipline themselves. —Thomas Jefferson*

*Gun control should be further tightened because guns do not deter crime.*

*Because gun control punishes only law-abiding citizens, it should not be further tightened.*

- II. Write your own thesis on a topic of your own choosing, including a single claim and at least three premises.