

What is a Thesis Statement?



Once you have decided what information you plan to present in your essay, you are ready to write your thesis statement. The thesis statement tells the reader what the essay will be about and what point you will be making. It is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of your paper or previews its main ideas; in other words, what do the main ideas and supporting ideas say about your topic? You may revise your thesis statement whenever you want to while you are writing your essay. You may discover what your real purpose and point are while in the process of putting your thoughts into words and then reading what you've written.

Why should your essay contain a Thesis Statement?

- To test your ideas by putting them into a sentence or two
- To better organize and develop your argument.
- To provide your reader with a “guide” to your argument

There are two parts to a thesis statement:

1. The first part states the topic
2. The second part states the point of the essay and what you intend to prove.

Determine what kind of paper you are writing:

- An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the reader.
- An **expository** (explanatory) paper explains something to the reader.

- An **argumentative** paper makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim, based on the evidence provided, is true.

Attributes of a good thesis:

- A thesis statement is an assertion not a statement of fact or an observation.
- A thesis takes a stand rather than announces a subject.
- A thesis is the main idea, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what you expect to present in the paper.
- A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad.
- A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.
- A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points.
- A thesis statement inspires a reasonable reader to ask, “How?” or “Why?”
- A thesis statement is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself.

Thesis Brainstorming--As you read look for:

- Are there interesting contrasts or comparisons emerging in the information?
- Is there something about the topic that surprises you?
- Do you encounter ideas that make you wonder why?
- Does something an “expert” says make you respond, “No way, that can’t be right,” or “I agree?”

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The Scott Foresman Handout for Writers, 3rd ed, by Maxine Hairston and John Ruszkiewice, NY: HarperCollins, 1993. Print.
Skwire, David. Writing with a Thesis, 5th ed.. NY: Holt, 1990. Print.

“What is a Thesis?” <<http://www.sdst.org/shs/library/thesis.html>>.

“Creating a Thesis Statement.” The Owl at Purdue. <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>>.

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>>.

“How to Write a Thesis Statement.” Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services. <

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml>.