

Topic: Thesis Statements

Purpose

A thesis statement clearly expresses the main argument or the central claim of your paper.

- The statement is typically placed towards the end of your introduction.
- The thesis controls what will be and what will not be in your paper.
- A thesis aids the reader in understanding the paper's main focus.

Step one: Understand the assignment

- To create a successful thesis statement, you should have dissected the assignment.
- Closely read your assignment guidelines to understand specific components or points that need to be addressed.
- Make note of the main question(s) in the assignment instructions.
- Printing out the assignment and highlighting main points may help.
- Good thesis statements and good papers fully reflect your professor's instructions.

Step two: Working thesis

- A *working thesis* is simply a thesis statement that you may change as you obtain more information about the topic.
- Refer back to the main points you highlighted in your assignment guidelines as you write your thesis.
- Address as many of the following questions as you can (some may not apply):
 - Who
 - What
 - When
 - Where
 - Why
 - How

Step three: Editing the thesis

Your thesis statement should present a claim that can be argued (unless your professor has asked for a paper presenting facts without an argument).

- Avoid statements that most everyone will agree with, such as the following example:
 - *Water quality in New York State should be improved to protect the health of citizens.*
- Instead, present a more arguable thesis, such as the following example:
 - *New York State should impose a one percent surtax on consumer sales to raise needed funds to protect New York's water supply.*

- While most people agree water quality should be protected, the claim in the above statement that sales tax should be raised is controversial and arguable.

Step four: Check the thesis

Broad thesis statements are statements that cover an area that is too wide and does not allow the writer to discuss the topic in a meaningful way.

- If the thesis statement is too broad, the paper will lack focus:
 - *Americans should drive more electric cars in order to help the environment.*
- If the thesis statement is too narrow the content of the paper will be limited:
 - *Americans living in urban areas should drive electric cars to save on maintenance costs.*

The following is an example of a thesis statement that is sufficiently narrow, and provides the reader with a focused discussion:

- *In urban areas, electric cars provide people with a more environmentally friendly way to drive.*
- *City dwellers should drive electric cars in order to cut vehicle emissions, limit oil usage, and save money.*

The above two-sentence thesis statement provides a focus on environmental benefits of electric cars in urban areas and provides three specific areas of discussion.

Step five: Review & adjust

- Review and adjust the thesis during the writing process as needed.
- Some possible reasons to change a thesis statement are:
- You learned more about the topic and found stronger points to address.
- You were not able to find sufficient research on part of your thesis.
- Your opinion on the topic changed during the research process.

Note: Begin your assignment early so you have adequate time to create and adjust your thesis statement!