

How to write a Thesis Statement

..... a practical handout

What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement briefly states the purpose of your paper and why it is important. It is found usually at the end of an introduction and acts as a roadmap for the rest of your paper. Most thesis statements are only one sentence, but it can be two or three sentences if you feel it is necessary.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement should always include three things:

1. **Topic**
2. **Argument/Claim**
3. **Evidence**

1. **Topic** = the topic of your paper. This is based on the assignment's requirements.
2. **Argument/Claim** = this depends on the type of paper you are writing. If it is an argumentative paper, then this should express your opinion. If it is a research or explanatory paper, this should explain the purpose of your paper.
3. **Evidence** = the support for your argument/claim. Usually, there are **three** pieces of evidence used in your thesis. These pieces can then shape the topics of your body paragraphs.

Once you have these three elements, you can combine them to create your thesis statement.

Example 1 (argumentative):

1. **Topic** = The *Harry Potter* book series
2. **Argument** = stole many fantastical elements from *The Lord of the Rings* series
3. **Evidence** = giant spiders, dangerous hooded undead creatures (Dementors and Nazgul), and a wise mentor.

The *Harry Potter* book series stole many fantastical elements from *The Lord of the Rings* series. Some of the uncanny similarities include giant spiders, dangerous hooded undead creatures, and a wise mentor that the hero must learn to survive without.

Example 2 (Research/explanatory):

1. **Topic** = Cheese
2. **Claim** = has healthy tendencies
3. **Evidence** = calcium helps bones and teeth, boosts the growth of good bacteria in the gut, and the protein helps cells repair themselves

Research has shown that cheese has healthy tendencies because its calcium provides necessary nutrients for the growth of bone and teeth, it boosts the growth of food bacteria in the gut, and it has protein that helps cells repair themselves.

Quality Check

After you have written your thesis statement, ask yourself these questions to check its overall strength:

- Do I answer the prompt?
- Could someone challenge or disagree with my position?
- Is my thesis statement specific?
- Does it pass the “So what?” test?
- Does it pass the “how and why?” test?
- Does the rest of the essay match my thesis?

When Should I Write My Thesis Statement?

It depends. Some people find it easier to write their thesis statement first before beginning their paper. Others find it easier to write after they have written their body paragraphs.

Whatever you prefer, it is important to make sure that your body paragraphs match your thesis statement. You can do this by reverse outlining, which you can do after you have written your paper.

References

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