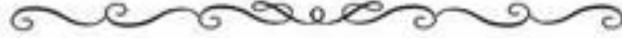


What's in a Thesis?



Coming up with a strong thesis can be one of the hardest parts of writing a paper, and it can be difficult to think of exactly what you want to say to get your best point across. So let's break it down.

The definition of a thesis: ***It is the main idea of a piece of writing. It presents the author's assertion (statement or declaration) or claim (the critical argument). The effectiveness of a presentation is often based on how well the writer presents, develops, and supports the thesis. In other words, your thesis sums up in a sentence or two what exactly your whole essay is trying to communicate to the reader.***

Some of your teachers may want your thesis to be short and sweet, while others may be looking for a lengthier one. It's always a good idea to check with them ahead of time about what they want to see in your thesis statement. Just remember to never to sacrifice your main points by trying to make your statement longer or shorter.

Because you are in college, you will be expected to have more sophisticated thesis statements to reflect you as a more mature writer. One way to achieve this is to eliminate repetitive material. Therefore, your elaboratives will now appear only in the essay as topic sentences of your body paragraphs.

Your thesis should include the topics you are going to discuss in the body paragraphs, **but** not as complete sentences. Secondly, a sign of more mature writing is the absence of direct statements of the writer's intent. In other words, DO NOT use statements like "In this essay I will prove..." or "This essay will discuss..." Don't announce what you want to say, just say it!

A thesis statement should always include the following:

- *The title or author of the work in discussion (if applicable)*
- *An occasion- position, statement- what is your general point?*
- *A brief statement of the points you will use to support your position (don't make a list; again ask your teacher if they would like you to include this)*
- *Some word or phrase that will indicate the approach you will take, or the points you will prove, comparisons trying to be made, etc.*

***For this set-up, here is an example.

Prompt: In John Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl*, analyze the reasons why Kino and his family suffered so much throughout the novel. Decide on a main reason/theme for their suffering, and support your thesis with examples from the text.

Example thesis: "In John Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl*, the biggest reason Kino and his family suffered so much was due to Kino's increased greed after finding the pearl, which caused him to become obsessed with wealth, act violent, and lead to the eventual destruction of his family."

Some other key points

- Your thesis statement is typically made at the end of the first paragraph of your essay.
- Don't be afraid to revise your thesis as you write your paper. Sometimes as you collect information or work further on your paper, your topics, views, etc. may change which is typically fine; just be sure to update your thesis statement so that it is cohesive with the rest of your paper.
- Know what kind of paper you're writing. This will help you develop what kind of thesis statement you will be developing also.

Different Types of Thesis Statements and Examples

Depending on what type of paper you are writing, your thesis statements will not always be written the same way. For this reason, here are some examples of some common types of essays and sample thesis statements. If the paper you are writing does not fit any of these examples, ask your teacher or someone in the writing center for further assistance. (definitions and examples provided by owl.english.purdue.edu)

The Analytical Paper

These essays will break down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluate the issue or idea, and present this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.

Example of an analytical thesis statement:

An analysis of the college admission process reveals one challenge facing counselors: accepting students with high test scores or students with strong extracurricular backgrounds.

The paper that follows should:

- explain the analysis of the college admission process
- explain the challenge facing admissions counselors

The Expository (explanatory) Paper

These essays explain something to the audience.

Example of an expository (explanatory) thesis statement:

The life of the typical college student is characterized by time spent studying, attending class, and socializing with peers.

The paper that follows should:

- explain how students spend their time studying, attending class, and socializing with peers

The Argumentative Paper

These essays make a claim about a topic, then justifies that 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 is true based on the evidence provided.

Example of an argumentative thesis statement:

High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.

The paper that follows should:

- present an argument and give evidence to support the claim that students should pursue community projects before entering college

Practice Thesis Statements

These practices will help you get the basic set-up for writing thesis statements. The main idea is to look at the topic and the writer's point, and come up with a thesis statement of your own. For these practices your thesis statements can be 1-2 (or 3) sentences long. Try to be concise! The answers are attached to the back. Don't worry if they're not word-for-word; the idea is to get something close or similar to the answer given. *(first 5 examples provided from "Writing for Life" by D.J. Henry)

1. Topic: workplace aggression

Writer's point: is on the rise and takes on several forms of behavior

Thesis Statement: _____

2. Topic: cardiovascular disease

Writer's point: although certain factors of cardiovascular disease are unavoidable, we can influence others through our behavior.

Thesis Statement: _____

3. Topic: major depressive disorder

Writer's point: a common type of mood disorder with several long-term effects

Thesis Statement: _____

4. Topic: use of chat rooms and online discussion boards

Writer's point: five tips for effectiveness

Thesis Statement: _____

5. Topic: weight training machines and free weights

Writer's point: similarities and differences

Thesis Statement: _____

6. Topic: Gay Marriage

Writer's point: *you take a side/ come up with reasons to argue for or against

Thesis Statement (argumentative): _____

7. Topic: Abortion

Writer's point: *you take a side/ come up with reasons to argue for or against

Thesis Statement (argumentative): _____

Answer Key

1. Workplace aggression is on the rise and takes on several forms of behavior.
2. Although certain factors of cardiovascular disease are unavoidable, we can influence others through our behavior.
3. One common type of mood disorder with several long-term effects is major depressive disorder.
4. Your use of chat rooms and online discussion boards will be more effective if you follow five tips.
5. Although weight training with machines and with free weights are similar in several ways, important differences exist between the two methods.
6. *answers may vary
7. *answers may vary