



Writing an Effective Thesis Statement

What is a Thesis?

The thesis is a statement (usually a single sentence) that expresses the central idea or main argument of the essay and reflects the writer's purpose for writing it.

It typically appears at the end of the introduction, as the last sentence (though it may appear elsewhere). For more on introductions, see our handout Writing an Effective Introduction.

The thesis may be implied or explicitly stated, but should always be evident to the reader.

The thesis may differ depending on the type of writing (argumentative, persuasive, informative, narrative, etc...).

The thesis should be restated in a new and interesting way in the conclusion.

Explicit vs. Implied

Explicit: An explicit thesis directly states the writer's main idea/position and provides a clear direction for the essay. For example,

The problems facing Africa are poverty, political corruption, and poor healthcare.

Implied: An implied thesis is not directly stated, but rather suggested through the writer's ideas and supporting points. Nonetheless, it should still be obvious to the reader. For example,

There are a number of serious problems facing Africa today which require attention.

Parts of a thesis:

Thesis statement = Claim + Supporting Points

The **claim** states the main idea of the essay, and tells your reader what you intend to convince them.

For example,

Claim: Being a vegetarian is better than eating meat...

The **supporting points** in the thesis are the major points to be discussed in the body of the essay, and they tell your reader what they should expect to learn in support of your claim, and in what order.

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For example,

Supporting Point 1: because it is healthier,

Supporting Point 2: costs less,

Supporting Point 3: and doesn't harm animals.

Put your claim and your supporting points together into one sentence that expresses the central idea of your essay. This is your thesis statement:

Being a vegetarian is better than eating meat because it is healthier, costs less, and doesn't harm animals.

From here, your supporting points will provide the main ideas for your paper's body paragraphs. For more on body paragraphs and the overall structure of your paper, see our handouts *Is Your Paragraph a Complete M.E.A.L.?* and *General Academic Essay Outline*

Things to Avoid:

Don't announce your thesis: "In this essay, I am going to tell you about vegetarianism and why everyone should adopt this lifestyle." Some instructors may encourage this type of first-person statement; however, always refer to your professor's instructions.

Don't confuse your readers: The thesis should be clear and focus on ONE main idea.

Don't write the thesis as a fact: This doesn't allow the writer to develop their ideas or prove anything, because the statement is already factual and does not require additional explanation.

Don't write the thesis as a question: This allows readers, rather than the writer, to determine the meaning of the essay. For example: "Don't you think eating meat is inhumane?" may be more effectively restated as "Eating meat is inhumane because..."

Types of thesis statements

This next part of this handout outlines a variety of thesis statements that you can use in academic writing.

Argumentative Thesis

The argumentative thesis takes a clear position on a debatable issue/topic and suggests or states the supporting reason(s) for that stance, which will be discussed further in the body of the essay.

Claim: A vegetarian diet is better than a diet that includes meat...

Supporting Point 1: ... because a vegetarian diet is healthier,

Supporting Point 2: costs less,

Supporting Point 3: and is more humane towards animals.

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Your thesis statement, in full sentence, would read as,

A vegetarian diet is better than a diet that includes meat because a vegetarian diet is healthier, it costs less, and it is more humane towards animals.

Persuasive/Proposal Thesis

Takes a clear position on a debatable issue/topic, attempting to persuade a specific audience to enact some sort of change, and suggests or states the supporting reason(s) for that stance, which will be discussed further in the body of the essay.

Claim: We, as a society, should require a parenting license for new parents

Supporting Point 1: because it will reduce infant mortality rates,

Supporting Point 2: improve children's health,

Supporting Point 3: and create better citizens.

Full Thesis Statement: We, as a society, should require a parenting license for new parents because it will reduce infant mortality rates, improve children's health, and create better citizens.

Informative/Expository Thesis

Introduces the subject or topic that the essay will define, explain, and inform the reader about, and suggests or states the specific elements to be discussed in the body of the essay. Informative writing does not contain the writer's opinion and should not attempt to form an argument or persuade readers.

Claim: To fully understand hip-hop culture, it is important to consider its origins

Supporting Point 1: in break dancing,

Supporting Point 2: deejaying,

Supporting Point 3: and emceeing.

Full Thesis Statement: To fully understand hip-hop culture it is important to consider its origins in break dancing, deejaying, and emceeing.

Compare/Contrast Thesis

Introduces two or more subjects to be compared and contrasted in the body of the essay, and suggests or states the specific points upon which they will be compared.

Claim: The similarities and differences between democrats and republicans can be seen by comparing

Supporting Point 1: their economic approaches

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Supporting Point 2: their domestic concerns,

Supporting Point 3: and their foreign policies.

Full Thesis Statement: The similarities and differences between democrats and republicans can be seen by comparing their economic approaches, their domestic concerns, and their foreign policies.

Common Ground Thesis

Introduces two opposing viewpoints, indicating that, despite their obvious disagreement, there are common grounds upon which they agree and also states or suggests the specific points of disagreement/agreement to be discussed in the body of the essay.

Opposing viewpoints: Although democrats and republicans disagree about many things,

Claim: they do share the common values of

Supporting Point 1: strengthening the economy,

Supporting Point 2: protecting human rights,

Supporting Point 3: and improving the education system.

Full Thesis Statement: Although democrats and republicans disagree about many things, they do share the common values of strengthening the economy, protecting human rights, and improving the education system.

Process thesis

Introduces a particular process and suggests or states the specific steps/parts of the process which will be discussed, in detail, throughout the body of the essay.

Claim: There are four important steps in the process of writing an essay,

Supporting Point 1: including prewriting,

Supporting Point 2: drafting,

Supporting Point 3: revising,

Supporting Point 4: and editing.

Full Thesis Statement: There are four important steps in the process of writing an essay, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

Narrative/Significant Event Thesis

Introduces the subject or topic of the narrative and emphasizes the overall significance and importance of the events described in the essay.

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Claim about the subject of the narrative: The day that my first child was born was a significant event in my life

Supporting Point: because it drastically changed my perspective on personal responsibility.

Full Thesis Statement: The day that my first child was born was a significant event in my life because it drastically changed my perspective on personal responsibility.

Cause and Effect Thesis

Identifies one cause and suggests or states what the resulting effects are OR identifies one effect and suggests or states the multiple causes of that effect.

Example 1

Cause: Global warming

Effect 1: increased natural disasters

Effect 2: agricultural losses

Effect 3: the extinction of species

Full Thesis Statement: Global warming has a number of negative effects, including increased natural disasters, agricultural losses, and the extinction of species.

Example 2

Effect: Global warming

Cause 1: including pollution from fossil fuels

Cause 2: deforestation

Cause 3: the use of too much hairspray during the 80's

Full Thesis Statement: Global warming is the result of three causes, including pollution from fossil fuels, deforestation, and the use of too much hairspray during the 80's.

Illustration/Definition/Concept Thesis

Introduces a concept that requires further definition/explanation/illustration and suggests or states the various aspects of the concept to be discussed, in detail, throughout the body of the essay.

Concept: The concept of love can be illustrated by examining three different forms of love, including

Aspect 1: familial love,

Aspect 2: platonic love,

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Aspect 3: and romantic love.

Full Thesis Statement: The concept of love can be illustrated by examining three different forms of love, including familial love, platonic love, and romantic love.

Profile/Descriptive Thesis

Introduces a subject (person, place, object, etc.) and the writer's dominant impression of it, and then suggests or states the specific characteristics of that subject, which will be discussed, in detail, throughout the body of the essay, to demonstrate this dominant impression.

Subject: The CCD Writing Center

Characteristic 1: physical design

Characteristic 2: the types of people who frequent it

Characteristic 3: the friendly atmosphere

Full Thesis Statement: The most defining characteristics of the CCD Writing Center include its physical design, the types of people who frequent it, and the friendly atmosphere.

Problem-Solution/Proposal Thesis

Introduces a problem and proposes a possible solution, suggesting or stating the specific parts of the solution to be discussed further in the body of the essay.

Problem: global warming

Solution 1: the development of alternative fuel sources,

Solution 2: replanting deforested areas,

Solution 3: and limiting individual energy consumption.

Full Thesis Statement: An effective solution to the problem of global warming will involve the development of alternative fuel sources, replanting deforested areas, and limiting individual

Evaluative Thesis

Introduces one or more subjects to be evaluated, makes an evaluative judgment about the subject(s), and suggests or states the specific criteria upon which it/they will be thoroughly evaluated throughout the body of the essay. An evaluative essay can focus on either positive or negative aspects, or it can include both.

Example 1—focuses only on positive aspects of the subject

Crash is an excellent movie because of the realistic acting, the provocative subject matter, and the great character development.

Example 2—includes both negative and positive aspects of the subject

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Although Crash has very poor plot development, it is an effective film, overall, because of its realistic acting and thorough character development.

Rhetorical Analysis Thesis

Introduces a text, such as a book, film, or advertisement, and makes an evaluative judgment about the effectiveness of the author's use of rhetorical appeals, such as ethos, pathos, and logos, to persuade readers of his/her claim.

Example: Dr. Seuss effectively convinces readers that green eggs and ham are delicious, through his skilled use of ethos, pathos, and logos.

These are only basic examples of thesis statements. We encourage you to experiment with these formats in order to develop a thesis statement that best suits your particular piece of writing.

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