



THESIS STATEMENTS

A thesis statement serves as the argument or claim around which your essay is organized. When people finish reading what you've written, what central message do you want them to take away? That's your thesis.

Normally, an author states his/her thesis early in an essay, providing the reader with a map of what's to come. Often, the thesis also appears near the end of an essay, and the author builds toward it throughout the piece of writing. When deciding where to place your thesis statement, consider the nature of the writing, the needs of your audience, instructor guidelines, and discipline-specific expectations or requirements.

Research, reflection, writing, and conversation can help you determine your thesis. Stay open to revising it as you clarify what you want to say. In the end, be sure the thesis statement and the content of your essay align. That is, the details in your essay should support the stated thesis!

A Thesis Statement

- ◆ Expresses one central idea
- ◆ Justifies discussion, is debatable
- ◆ Takes a stand, asserts your own conclusion based on evidence and/or reasoning
- ◆ Should help the reader answer the question: Why does this subject matter?
- ◆ Is normally a single sentence or a short series of connected sentences



- ◆ Often has two or more parts, connected by “hinge” words or phrases, such as “but,” “and,” “because,” or “as a result”

A Thesis Statement is not

- ◆ A question or a list
- ◆ A simple statement of fact
- ◆ Vague

Sample Thesis Statements from AUNE Writing Center Tutors

The thesis statements below were adapted from student writing and are used with permission.

In group therapy, the anxious patient learns how to manage anxiety in the midst of group sessions, which involve many more dynamic social interactions than a one-on-one session possibly could; as a result, the individual can make remarkable changes in a compressed time frame. (Aubry Koehler)

Because trees use and store large quantities of CO₂, they are critical to efforts to mitigate increasing carbon dioxide emissions and key to slowing climate change. (Tracy Bartella)

My transition from omnivore to “flexitarian”/vegetarian has been neither smooth nor successful, but given how much I’ve learned en route—about environmental degradation and my own entrenched behaviors around eating habits—the process has been worth it. (Matt Young)

Colonial legacies divide communities, de-legitimize their legal and moral rights, and separate them from their land-bases; to be effective, commons management must counter these legacies using both top-down and bottom-up strategies. (John Dunham)

*Developed by Cindy Snow
for the AUNE Writing Center*



Thesis Writing Tips!

- ◆ Your Thesis Statement should answer an essential question. For example, perhaps your assignment is to write about an environmental issue. Your essential question might be: “How can we decrease ocean pollution?” Your thesis statement, then, would be your answer: “Ocean pollution can be decreased by...”
- ◆ Tailor your thesis statement to the assignment. Are you writing an argumentative paper? Compare and contrast? Expository? A personal narrative? If you’re writing an argumentative paper, your thesis statement should argue a point, where as a thesis in a personal narrative might simply foreshadow an event or discuss something you learned about a story you’re about to tell.
- ◆ Write your thesis statement on an index card and tape it to your computer or your desk so that every time you begin a new paragraph, you can re-read it and ask yourself if this next paragraph’s topic supports or further elaborates on your thesis statement.
- ◆ Your thesis statement doesn’t help just your reader— it serves as a compass to continually point you in the right direction. Sometimes we get lost in our own papers and get distracted by tangents and details. The thesis statement reminds you of your own point so that you stay on the road you’re paving for yourself.

Compiled by VWC Staff