

WRITING CENTER TIP SHEET

Creating a Thesis Statement

Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a sentence (or sentences) that expresses the main ideas of your paper and answers the question or questions posed by your paper. It offers your readers a quick and easy-to-follow summary of what the paper will be discussing and what you as a writer are setting out to tell them. There are different ways to achieve this through different types of thesis statements. The kind of thesis that your paper will have will depend on the purpose of your writing.

General Thesis Statement Tips

- _ A thesis statement generally consists of two parts: your topic, and then the analysis, explanation(s), or assertion(s) that you're making about the topic.
- _ A thesis statement is a very **specific** statement -- *it should cover only what you want to discuss in your paper, and be supported with specific evidence* later on in the paper.
- _ Generally, a thesis statement appears at the end of the first paragraph of an essay, so that readers will have a clear idea of what to expect as they read.
- _ Don't fall in love with your thesis. Your thesis statement should change as you develop your ideas and write your paper. The best papers have thesis statements that reflect where the paper ended up, not where it was when you started your rough draft.
- _ You can think of your thesis as a map or a guide both for yourself and your audience, so it might be helpful to draw a chart or picture of your ideas and how they're connected to help you get started.

Getting Started:

- _ What is my paper about?
- _ Is there a specific body of work that I reference in the paper?
- _ How many examples or points am I going to make?
- _ Am I analyzing a concept, explaining a point, or arguing an opinion in this paper?

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Types of Thesis Statements

Analytical Thesis Statements (for analyzing a concept)

In an analytical paper, you are breaking down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluating the issue or idea, and presenting this breakdown and evaluation to your audience. An analytical thesis statement will explain:

- * what you are analyzing
- * the parts of your analysis
- * the order in which you will be presenting your analysis

Example: An analysis of barn owl flight behavior reveals two kinds of flight patterns: patterns related to hunting prey and patterns related to courtship.

A reader who encountered that thesis in a paper would expect an explanation of the analysis of barn owl flight behavior, and then an explanation of the two kinds of flight patterns.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an analytical thesis statement:

- * What did I analyze?
- * What did I discover in my analysis?
- * How can I categorize my discoveries?
- * In what order should I present my discoveries?

Expository (Explanatory) Thesis Statements (for explaining a point)

In an expository paper, you are explaining something to your audience. An expository thesis statement will tell your audience:

- * what you are going to explain to them
- * the categories you are using to organize your explanation
- * the order in which you will be presenting your categories

Example: The lifestyles of barn owls include hunting for insects and animals, building nests, and raising their young.

A reader who encountered that thesis would expect the paper to explain how barn owls hunt for insects, build nests, and raise young.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an expository thesis statement:

- * What am I trying to explain?
- * How can I categorize my explanation into different parts?
- * In what order should I present the different parts of my explanation?

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Types of Thesis Statements, continued

Argumentative Thesis Statements (for arguing a point)

In an argumentative paper, you are making a claim about a topic and justifying this claim with reasons and evidence. This claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. However, this claim must be a statement that people could possibly disagree with, because the goal of your paper is to convince your audience that your claim is true based on your presentation of your reasons and evidence. An argumentative thesis statement will tell your audience:

- * your claim or assertion
- * the reasons/evidence that support this claim
- * the order in which you will be presenting your reasons and evidence

Example: Barn owls' nests should not be eliminated from barns because barn owls help farmers by eliminating insect and rodent pests.

A reader who encountered this thesis would expect to be presented with an argument and evidence that farmers should not get rid of barn owls when they find them nesting in their barns. What order will their evidence be presented in?

Questions to ask yourself when writing an argumentative thesis statement:

- * What is my claim or assertion?
- * What are the reasons I have to support my claim or assertion?
- * In what order should I present my reasons?

Remember This:

- _ Whatever order information is listed in your thesis statement should be the order in which it is discussed in the paper
- _ If you are writing about a piece of artwork (or a book or article), the title of the piece and the artist (or the title and author of the piece), must be mentioned in your thesis statement.