

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.
- The kind of thesis that your paper will have will depend on the purpose of your writing.
- This handout will cover general thesis statement tips, explain some of the different types of thesis statements, and provide some links to other resources about writing thesis statements.

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. The kind of thesis statement you write will depend on what kind of paper you're writing.
- In some kinds of writing, such as narratives or descriptions, a thesis statement is less important, but you may still want to provide some kind of statement in your first paragraph that helps to guide your reader through your paper.
- 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. The scope of your paper will be determined by the length of your paper and any other requirements that might be in place.
- 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.

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- 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.
- As you write and revise your paper, it's okay to change your thesis statement -- sometimes you don't discover what you really want to say about a topic until you've started (or finished) writing! Just make sure that your "final" thesis statement accurately shows what will happen in your paper.
- A thesis statement is an assertion, not a statement of fact or an observation.
 - Fact or observation: People use many lawn chemicals.
 - Thesis: People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.
- A thesis takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.
 - Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.
 - Thesis: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.
- A thesis is the main idea, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what you expect to write about.
 - Title: Social Security and Old Age.
 - Thesis: Continuing changes in the Social Security System makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.

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- A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.
 - Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.
 - Narrow: The primary problem if the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.
- A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.
 - Vague: Hemingway's war stories are very good.
 - Specific: Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.
- A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.
 - More than one main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.
 - One Main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world renowned physicist.

"Analyze the economic, social, and cultural factors involved in the origins and spread of the Reformation."

"Compare the development of 'Constitutional Monarchy' in England with the development of 'Absolutism' in France during the 17th century."

"Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke."

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"Compare and contrast the relationship of the nobility and the central government in Great Britain and France in the 17th and early 18th centuries."