The Thesis Statement: What Is It?

Choose the definition below that works best for you and keep it near your computer as you draft your paper. An effective thesis statement:

- is a statement of an essay’s central theme that makes clear the main idea, the writer’s purpose, the focus of the topic, and perhaps the organizational pattern (Troyka 769).
- satisfies the reader’s desire to know early in the paper what the central idea is and how the essay writer will go about presenting it.

- is an introductory sentence which names the topics to be developed in the body of an essay (Roberts and Jacobs 1911).
- acts as a road map to the essay by announcing the destination and suggesting the route for getting there.

- is an organizing sentence that plans or forecasts the major topics to be treated in the essay (Roberts and Jacobs 21).
- provides a clear framework for developing a focused analysis of a limited idea.

- lists the parts to be fastened together—the topics in which the central idea is to be demonstrated and argued (Roberts and Jacobs 22).
- expresses and clarifies the writer’s point of view or perspective on a narrowly defined topic.

- is a concise, memorable summing up of what the writer is trying to prove (Guth and Rico 1842).
- is arguable; the paper proves the thesis with specific, detailed evidence.

- will control and focus the entire paper, give order to details of the essay by providing unity and a sense of direction, and will specify to the reader the point of the research or essay.
- Is significant and thoughtful, an overarching point that is complex, subtle, and perhaps even unexpected.

- is fact + idea.
- is an attitude or position taken by a writer or speaker with the purpose of supporting it.

- answers the question “What is the point of the essay?”
- is an attitude or position taken by a writer or speaker with the purpose of supporting it.

Adapted from “The Thesis Statement: What Is It?” by the Brenau University Writing Center.

Works Cited

Armstrong Atlantic State University
Writing Center
Tips for Writing a Clear and Effective Thesis Statement

β Research your topic.

β Choose an approach or idea that interests you. Write about something that elicits your curiosity, agreement, or disagreement. If you are bored by your topic, your reader will be as well.

β When a first draft is complete, revise your thesis statement to make it as sharp, specific, and focused as possible. Choose vivid language and active verbs.

β Narrow the focus of your main ideas.

β As a general rule, the thesis statement should appear at the end of the introduction.

β Draft a preliminary thesis statement to guide you as you work on the paper; you can refine the language later.

β Strive to create a single-sentence thesis statement, although more complex papers may require a two- or three-sentence thesis.

β Create a thesis that offers an original perspective or insight.

β If applicable, be certain to use the literary text about which you are writing or outside sources to prove your point.

β Keep your thesis statement visible as you work.


β Organize the body of your paper so that the topic sentences support the thesis.

β Visit the Writing Center, located in 109 Gamble Hall, for feedback.

β Some assignments may lead themselves to a three-part thesis statement, but do not feel limited to this approach.

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