

Thesis Statements

Q: What is a thesis statement, and why do I need one?

A: A thesis statement [usually] is the last sentence of your introduction paragraph. As per its title, your thesis is a statement—rather than a question. Your thesis will be one, concise statement that will guide your reader and give a general progression of main points. Your following paragraphs will connect/refer back to the thesis statement. Having a clear thesis keeps your points organized and helps to create a cohesive essay.

Q: How do I write an effective thesis statement?

A: 1. Narrow the subject to a single, central subject and significant ideas the essay will support. Your thesis should make a point about a topic. Avoid creating just a list of information you find. After your central subject is identified, articulate your main points in the order you will present them.

2. State your position or point you are arguing, not just a summary of information. Your thesis should state your position or the points you are arguing. It should **synthesize** and bring together your analysis of the primary text with your use of outside sources. Although your thesis will be one sentence, it will be two parts. The latter part of the thesis will answer the “so what” question. [Why should people care about your topic? Why is it important? What is your purpose for writing?]

****synthesize: combining multiple sources and ideas. You will create new ideas based on your analysis of what you have read.**

3. As you write your paper, keep an eye on your thesis statement. Re-evaluate your thesis. Do your main points stray away from your thesis statement? Do you focus on a minor point made in the thesis statement? Your thesis is a promise—and a guide—so make sure it’s accurate with regard to the content of your paper.

4. Unless otherwise noted, write in third person. Avoid using “I,” “my,” “me” in your thesis statement. Your thesis statement should focus on the point or argument that you will establish throughout the paper. Make a firm provable statement rather than saying “I think” or “I believe.”

Q: What should I avoid when writing a thesis statement?

A: The following are suggestions about what **NOT** to do when writing a thesis statement. Your thesis statement is an outline/blueprint for your entire paper, so it needs to be accurate, concise, and thoughtful.

1. **Asking a question.** You may want to start with a question to get you thinking about what you want to focus on, especially when writing a research paper. However, you will turn that question into a clear statement. Again, if you finish writing and you find that your thesis no longer aligns with your following paragraphs, you will have to revise.

2. **Making an announcement:** Example: In my essay, I will talk about the challenges women face in the STEM fields. The example presented is a good start. Think about answering the “so what” question in the latter part of the statement—removing the announcement “I will talk about...”
3. **Stating a fact:** Example: Mt. Everest is the highest mountain. The author of this example doesn’t answer the “so what” question. The reader of the above statement will likely say “so what,” or “duh.”
4. **Quoting or referencing secondary material:** Example: Many authors have written about the challenges of climbing Mt. Everest, in particular about the famous “dead zone, where one climber, through almost superhuman endurance, survived the impossible” (“Mt. Everest”). In the above example, the writer is substituting another’s insight or observations in place of his/her own thesis statement.