

How to Write a Thesis Statement

Almost all essays need an effective thesis statement. But what is a thesis statement? Great question!

A thesis statement

- is usually one (maybe two) sentence(s)
- is normally found at the end of an introduction or introductory paragraph
- indicates the main point or controlling idea of an expository or informative paper
- asserts a claim or statement to be proved in an argumentative or persuasive paper
- evaluates a topic or issue in an analysis paper
- addresses the purpose of the prompt, task, or assignment
- provides focus for the written piece

One of the easiest mistakes to make when writing a thesis statement is confusing a thesis statement with a topic. A topic might be “famous books.” A thesis statement, on the other hand, takes this one step further and says something about your topic: “Famous books such as *The Cat in the Hat*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Hunger Games* have influenced American youth over the last century.”

It's a good idea to draft a thesis statement before you do too much writing. This helps you focus; it's your roadmap or blueprint. We call this a “working thesis,” so if you end up changing or adjusting it later, that's okay.

Here are a few other tips to consider:

1. Be specific in your word choice. Include details or show the relationship of ideas with words like “because.”

Good: The best pet is a cat.

Better: Cats make the best pets for busy people **because** they require less exercise and can be left for longer periods of time.

Good: Cricket and baseball are alike in some ways and different in others.

Better: **Although** both cricket and baseball use a bat and ball, the games are vastly different.

Good: Schools should move to a four-day week.

Better: Academic and behavioral indicators suggest that a four-day week will improve student and school performance.

2. Avoid statements like “In this paper, I will...” or “I think...” These phrases aren't really needed and can take away from the points you are making.

Good: In this paper, I will explain how to knit a scarf.

Better: Knitting a scarf requires a few specific tools and some patience as one masters the steps.

3. Tailor your thesis to the type of essay you are writing. See the chart on the next page for explanations and examples of thesis statements for a variety of different essay types.

Thesis Statements for Different Essay Types

We write thesis statements for many types of essays. Knowing the aim (purpose) of the type of essay assigned helps us ensure that our thesis statement appropriately guides the readers. **Use the chart below to consider how thesis statements are written for different types of essays.**

| Type of Essay | Aim | Strong Thesis Statement | Weak Thesis Statement |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Argumentative | To present one side of an argument as best | Although some believe gym classes are no longer worthwhile in today's society, yearly gym classes should be required for students because they improve health, advance social skills, and reduce stress.* <i>*Notice that this thesis statement advocates for a particular outcome to be enacted, while the weak example merely says that a general situation is good.</i> | Students get benefits from taking gym classes such as improved physical health, social skills, and mental health. |
| Case Study | To present a detailed study of a specific subject | By evaluating Jane Doe's medical history and presentation, probable kidney disease should have been assessed via blood labs, leading to administration of diuretics to reduce retention. | Jane Doe's medical records teach us about kidney disease. |
| Compare and Contrast | To note both similarities and differences between two things | While Disney World has a wider range of exciting rides and a lower overall cost for admission, Disneyland has better hospitality options and closer proximity to additional Southern California attractions. | There are both similarities and differences between Disney World and Disneyland. |
| Descriptive/ Explanatory | To share details on a particular topic to educate the audience | Medical professionals should know the causes, symptoms, and treatments for asthma as it is frequently seen in children. | This paper will share the causes, symptoms, and treatments for asthma. |
| Literary Analysis | To present an interpretation of the meaning or message of a novel, short story, or other work of fiction based on the literary devices used in the text. | In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman uses a controlled focalization, exceedingly chaotic diction, and gothic imagery to expose the misogyny of 19th century "hysteria." | Symbols are important in the book because it's about feminism. |
| Narrative | To tell a story; the story usually shares a lesson learned (These thesis statements often foreshadow the lesson that will be exposed in the conclusion.) | Soon, I would realize that the summer of 2011 would change my life forever. | I traveled to England where I met my best friend. |

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|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Process | To explain the steps to complete a task | With the proper knowledge and tools, changing a flat tire on a car can easily be broken down into three main steps: identification, removal, and installation. | I will teach you how to change a flat tire using the proper tools. |
| Reflection | To make sense of course material and experiences, predict future scenarios | Despite some challenges, I grew in my ability to analyze novels and write newspaper articles which will benefit me in English 405 next year. | Overall, I enjoyed the class and learned many things. |
| Rhetorical Analysis | To determine if the author's writing is effective and share the reasons why/why not | John Green effectively analyzes 21st century life through data, humor, and personal stories in <i>The Anthropocene Reviewed</i> . | The author uses figurative language, statistics, and personal stories. |