

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement A) is clear, B) is concise, and C) goes beyond fact and becomes an idea that needs to be supported with opinion and evidence.

We'll start with some effective thesis statements:

*Capital punishment is a remnant of times when humans were uncivilized.

*Recent studies of depression suggest that it is much more closely related to physiology than scientists had previously thought.

*After many years of evolution, roller coasters have become the central attraction at theme parks across the United States.

*The current American farm crisis can be traced to three major causes: -----, -----, and -----.

*The concept of a "nuclear winter" is more propaganda than science.

*Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.

The thesis statement defines your position on a topic or subject.

As well, it should be potentially interesting to your *intended* audience.

(For whom is the essay being written, anyway?)

If I were writing for pizza gourmets, my thesis statement might be:

Pizza Villa has a flavorful, kitsch, combination hit on its hand with the chocolate/hotdog/popcorn lovers' pizza pie because never has this tasty offering been conceived.

Avoid: "I think" "I believe" "I feel" "In this paper"

*Your reader(s) will know, because **you wrote the piece**, that **you think and believe and feel what you do about the topic**. As well, we know we are in your paper because we are reading it!*

A few important aspects of the thesis statement:

1. It usually appears toward the end of the introduction.
However, this may differ according to discipline.
2. It makes a point about your essay's topic.
Free hint: Ideally, the point made will be interesting, engaging, and who knows, life changing!
3. Once stated, the thesis becomes the driving force behind any essay.

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(Continued)

If you're having trouble coming up with a thesis...

One way to develop a thesis is to ask yourself genuine, difficult questions about the topic. Find an especially interesting question and state your response in a sentence, even if you're not sure why that's your answer. This new sentence may very well be a workable thesis.

Think of a strong statement about the subject that begins with the words "I believe that..." Write that sentence and then take the words "I believe that" out of the sentence. This new sentence may very well be a workable thesis.

For example, if your essay was to argue that Hamlet's madness was faked, your thesis statement might go a little bit like this:

While Hamlet's madness may seem genuine on the surface, it was very clearly faked.

Notice that the above statement could very well have begun with the word, "I believe..." because it is a declaration of what the writer believes and intends to prove in his/her essay.

Something to try, perhaps in the draft stage:

In this essay, I plan to ("explain," "argue," "demonstrate," "show," etc.) that _____ because of (1) _____(2) _____, and (3) _____

This is one way, not the only way, to begin working on a thesis! Please note the **simplicity** of the formula and the **direct approach** this requires, which can be strong characteristics not only for thesis statements, but for other parts of your essay.

What can the thesis statement do?

For the writer, the thesis statement

- Serves as a planning tool.
- Helps the writer determine the essay's real focus.
- Becomes a "hook" on which the writer can "hang" the topic sentences that present evidence in support of the thesis.

For the reader, the thesis statement

- Serves as a "map" to guide the reader through the paper.
- Prepares the reader to read.
- Keeps the reader focused on the main idea.
- Creates a reason to keep reading to discover the support behind the thesis.