



Endicott College Writing Center

Thesis Statements: A Comprehensive Overview

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What is a Thesis Statement?

A Thesis Statement is a point of view on a specific topic, or a condensed form of an argument. It serves as a summary for the argument or main point that you will make during your paper.

- It tells the reader how you will discuss and analyze your subject matter
- It is a claim that other people can dispute or interpret differently
- It can be an answer to a question – the Thesis takes a stance on a topic and provides a specific way of looking at that topic

Why include a Thesis Statement in your paper? What is its purpose?

The Thesis serves as a guide for the rest of your paper, and helps you better organize and develop your main idea. It also helps you give your reader an idea of the basic subject matter so he or she can read your paper more clearly.

Where should a Thesis Statement be located?

The Thesis Statement is usually a single sentence or a couple of cohesive sentences somewhere in the first paragraph of your paper – it should be towards the beginning of your paper in order to clarify your idea upfront.

How do I write a Thesis Statement?

The Thesis Statement should be the main idea of your paper and therefore is not the first task you tackle when you get a writing assignment or start your writing process. First, you must gather evidence, ideas, and research in order to define significant relationships and decide on a topic. You must analyze the information and decide on your main idea or argument. Before writing your paper, you can formulate a “working thesis,” or a main idea/argument that will be the main focus of your discussion. Throughout the writing process, brainstorm different ways of concisely stating your main idea in order to form a strong Thesis Statement. Look for key phrases, words, or concepts from your research that defines your main argument in order to form a statement that best represents your topic.

What makes a Thesis Statement strong?

A strong Thesis takes a stand on a subject, and could present an argument for others to dispute. In general, the Thesis promotes discussion on a topic that goes beyond basic

observation. A strong Thesis statement focuses on a specific topic and is not too broad; this way the paper will not be too vague and the argument will generate significance with the reader.

Questions to ask about your Thesis Statement:

- Does the Thesis take a stance on a subject that other people could dispute?
- Is my Thesis specific, or in other words does it answer the “how” and “why” of my argument?
- Does my Thesis pass the “so what?” test? (*Your reader should not ask “so what?” after reading the paper*)
- Does my Thesis Statement answer a question? Does it provide a potential solution?

Example 1:

Weak Thesis Statement

Suburban sprawl in America draws people away from cities and negatively affects urban economies.

(This Thesis Statement addresses a certain topic but does not present an argument or point for discussion. It does not pass the “so what?” test.)

Strong Thesis Statement

American society must re-think the way we develop our cities and towns in order to combat the negative economic effects of suburban sprawl.

(This Thesis Statement provides a solution and point of discussion for the topic – it takes a stance other people could dispute.)

Example 2:

Weak Thesis Statement

During the past ten years, there has been a Type II Diabetes epidemic in the U.S.

(This Thesis does not provide a reason for this epidemic and does not guide the reader to any discussion for the paper.)

Strong Thesis Statement

During the past ten years, cases of Type II Diabetes have increased exponentially due to unlawful practices of food production companies in the United States. The government needs to regulate the practices of these companies in order to ensure better health for U.S. citizens.

(This Thesis answers the how and the why, and provides an argument that must be backed up through evidence. It also provides a potential solution to the problem.)

Sources

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