

THESIS STATEMENTS

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is a strong statement that can be proven with evidence. It includes your position on a topic (your opinion), and an outline of your reasons for that position. The thesis statement is one sentence, contains the main idea of the essay, and is found in the introductory paragraph.

When do I write a thesis statement?

Develop a thesis statement about the topic after fully understanding your writing task, developing a statement of purpose* and gathering information. Then, write your thesis statement in the introduction, prove it with evidence in the body of your paper, project, or presentation, and finally restate it along with a summary of evidence in the conclusion.

**A statement of purpose is a sentence that states, in some detail, the goal of the paper, project, or presentation. Sometimes, for example when you are writing a research paper, you will need to develop your own statement of purpose. Other times, like when you are responding to a writing prompt, the statement of purpose is given to you.*

Different ways to write a thesis statement (choose 1):

- Define a problem and state your opinion about it.
- Discuss the development of an issue or problem and/or predict how it might be resolved.
- Suggest a possible solution to a problem.
- Evaluate an issue/topic from a new, interesting perspective.
- Theorize how the world might be different today if something had/had not happened in the past.
- Compare/contrast two or more similar subjects.

What does a thesis statement look like?

A thesis statement is an *assertion* about a topic and your *reasons* to support it, not just a topic or announcement.

Topic: Year round schooling

Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the problem with year round schooling.

opinion + 3 reasons = thesis statement

Opinion: Year round schooling is not beneficial for students

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Reasons: (1) it would create stress for the students, (2) it would cause negative feelings towards school, and (3) there would be limited vacation opportunities for families.

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Thesis: Year round schooling is not beneficial for students because it would create unnecessary stress, negativity toward school, and limited vacation opportunities.

Use a cause/effect transition to link your opinion on your writing topic with your three reasons. Some examples of good transitions to use in a thesis statement are "because," "due to," and "as a result of."

Your thesis statement will occur towards the end of your introduction, and will provide an outline for your audience as they read the rest of your essay.

A strong thesis statement shows the audience that the writer is organized, has a great understanding of their topic, and is able to effectively convey their opinion.

Thesis statements are an important part of any essay, whether the essay is **expository, analytical, or persuasive.**

Expository Essay Thesis Statement

*An **expository (explanatory)** paper explains something to the audience.*

Sample Prompt: Explain why a healthy diet is important.

Weak Thesis Examples:

- **Too broad:** A healthy diet is important.
- **Too narrow:** People should include eight servings of fruits and vegetables in their diet everyday.
- **Off topic:** Bananas are one of the most nutritious foods on earth.

Strong thesis: *A healthy diet is important because it increases energy, prevents illness and promotes well-being in all people.*

Persuasive Thesis Statement

*An **argumentative (persuasive)** paper makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.*

Sample Prompt: Convince your reader whether school uniforms should be mandatory in public schools.

Weak Thesis Examples:

- **Too broad:** It is outrageous for students to be forced to wear school uniforms.
- **Too narrow:** Students who are forced to wear school uniforms have their creativity stifled.
- **Off topic:** When kids grow up, they will have bad memories of school.

Strong thesis: *School uniforms should not be mandatory in public schools because it would stifle students' creativity, take away students' rights, and cause students to lose interest in school.*

Literary Analysis Thesis Statement

An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience

Sample Prompt: How does Kurt Vonnegut use literary elements to criticize the government in the short story, "Harrison Bergeron"?

Weak Thesis Examples:

- **Too broad:** Vonnegut criticized the government in many ways.
- **Too narrow:** Vonnegut shows that Harrison deserves to be treated fairly, not like he is a freak.
- **Off topic:** Vonnegut was also critical of too much government control in several novels he wrote.

Strong Thesis: In "Harrison Bergeron," Vonnegut criticizes the government through the use of indirect characterization, irony, and external conflict.

Checklist for a strong thesis statement:

1. Does your thesis statement respond directly to the prompt?
2. Does your thesis contain a definite statement?
3. Is your thesis an arguable claim?
4. Does your thesis show you have knowledge about your topic?
5. Does your thesis illustrate a passionate perspective?
6. Is your statement neither too specific nor too broad?
7. Does your thesis list the key points to be discussed in your essay?
8. Can you provide evidence to back up your thesis?

