

Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement?

- A thesis statement expresses the central idea of your paper.
- It is generally a claim that is not common knowledge.
- It generally contains one main idea, and no more than one main idea.
- It includes your subject and what you are going to say about it.
- It is usually in the first paragraph or introduction of your paper.
- It is usually one sentence, but it may be longer.
- It should be easily identifiable to your reader.

Thesis Statements for Research Papers

After doing your research, compose a statement that formulates both your topic and your point of view on that topic. Refine, if necessary, as you write your paper. Your paper must support or demonstrate this statement. Your goal is to persuade your reader, with supporting evidence found during your research, that your thesis is valid.

Bad example: There are currently many gas-saving devices on the market. (True, but this is common knowledge and imprecise. How many devices? Are they all the same? Which market? It also doesn't include your point of view on the topic.)

Good example: The vast majority of devices being marketed as mileage improvers are frauds. (Focused, worth arguing and demonstrating, contains your opinion)

Thesis Statements for Writing about Literature

In writing about literature, your main purposes are to acquire a better understanding of the work's meaning and explain what you understand or appreciate about the work to your readers. Interpret rather than report what happens in a story, poem or play. The main idea of your thesis statement should specify what new insights into meaning or the author your reading will demonstrate.

Bad example: In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Lowman is a despicable character. (Doesn't indicate why, makes it difficult to prove, is much too general in scope, and provides no insight or better understanding of the play).

Good example: In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Lowman is despicable because he forces his empty value system on his family. (Indicates why the author feels the character is despicable, can be proven with details from the play, and provides insight and better understanding of the character).

Thesis Statements for Personal Experience Essays

Your objective is to give the reader a dominant impression of an experience or some aspect of your personality. In writing your thesis statement, use descriptive language rather than vague words such as: interesting, unusual, important, and great.

Bad example: My education has been very unusual. (Vague, why should the reader care about this?)

Good example: Unlike most people, I received a valuable high school education from my parents while we traveled around the world on a sailboat. (Specific, focused)

Note: Thesis statements often occur spontaneously in the last paragraph of a rough draft.