



Thesis Statements

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What exactly is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is the main point or argument you are trying to make within your paper. Everything that happens in your essay is directed toward establishing its validity. Your thesis will evolve during the course of writing drafts, and because of that we often refer to it as a **working thesis statement**. As your paper and your ideas on the topic develop from one draft to the next, your thesis statement will develop as well.

The thesis statement is a good starting point. Drafting a working thesis statement before you dive into writing the bulk of your paper allows you to keep track of where you're going—and where you are trying to end up.

A few thesis-writing tips from the WaCC staff:

- WRITE IT DOWN! Writing down your thesis forces you to think of it clearly, logically, and concisely. This also allows you to refer back to it as you continue writing.
- Ask yourself: Do your paragraphs tie back to your thesis statement? If not, are you getting off track?
- Your body paragraphs exist to support, develop, and provide evidence for your thesis. Your thesis should relate to your body paragraphs; your body paragraphs should relate to your thesis.
- The standard place for a thesis statement is near or at the end of your introduction. This informs the reader of your argument and position before diving into the evidence you provide in the body paragraphs.
- Don't be too broad. Strong thesis statements argue a specific claim.
- Don't be afraid to revise your thesis statement as you continue to write your paper. It's called a **working thesis statement** for that very reason.
- When writing your thesis, consider not only your argument but also potential arguments *against your own argument*. This can help you refine your main idea and will help you think of the arguments that you'll refute later on in your essay.

Thesis statements should...

There are some things to consider when constructing your thesis statement. There are some things that work well in making thesis statements very strong and effective. Thesis statements should...

- ...be arguable. A thesis statement is something you can *debate* or *discuss*. Thesis statements aren't statements of fact.
- ...be supportable with evidence.
- ...be specific and narrow. A vague, overly broad thesis statement doesn't provide much focus for your argument.

Thesis statements shouldn't...

There are a lot of different ways to write a strong thesis statement, but there are also some things that can make a thesis statement weak or ineffective. Generally, thesis statements shouldn't...

- ...be a question. Your readers are expecting a discussion, explanation, or argument. A question is not an argument, and without an argument a thesis is dead in the water.
- ...be a list. The list may tell the reader what to expect in the essay, but doesn't present tension or an argument.
- ...be combative or confrontational. If readers strongly disagree with you off the bat, you'll lose them.

Let's take a look at some examples:

Working thesis statement: *In Seattle, 27 percent of people over age 18 drink more than two lattes a day.*

This thesis statement provides us with useful information, but it isn't an argument—it isn't debatable. This is a statement of fact.

Revised thesis statement: *Seattle residents consume lattes and other coffee drinks primarily to self-medicate for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).*

This can be argued and backed up with information from outside sources.

Working thesis statement: Paradoxically, the rise of Starbucks created a market that allowed small, independent coffeehouses to thrive.

This thesis statement is strong and effective: it is debatable, it isn't too broad, and it provides the reader with the context of the argument.

Additional Resources

For more example thesis statements or more information, visit the Purdue OWL 's resource on making strong thesis statements: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/01/>

UNC Sheet on writing thesis statements.

This handout was derived from the WaCC Peer Consultant Handbook and from "Thesis Statements: Crafting Strong Arguments" Writing Center Worksheet. Compiled by Travis Sharp, November, 2013.