

Writing a Thesis Statement

A **thesis statement** in an
essay is ...

a sentence that clearly
identifies the **purpose** of
the paper and **preview**s
its main ideas.

1. A thesis statement is an **assertion**, not a statement of fact or an observation.

Fact/Observation: People use many lawn chemicals.

Thesis: People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.

2. A thesis **takes a stand** rather than announcing a subject.

Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.

Thesis: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.

3. A thesis is the **main idea**, not the title. It must be a **complete sentence** that explains in some detail **what you expect to write about.**

Title: Social Security and Old Age.

Thesis: Continuing changes in the Social Security System make it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.

4. A thesis statement is **narrow**, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be **fully supported**.

Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.

Narrow: The primary problem of the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.

5. A thesis statement is **specific** rather than vague or general.

Vague: Hemingway's war stories are very good.

Specific: Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.

6. A thesis statement has **one main point** rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.

More than One Point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.

One Main Point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world renowned physicist.

You can **revise your thesis** statement whenever you want to while you are writing your essay.

Writers often discover what their real purpose and point is in the process of putting their thoughts into words and then reading what they've written.

Things to Remember about Thesis Statements

- a **single sentence**
- appears in the **introductory paragraph**, usually near the end
- **does not** use the words: I, me, my, etc.
- **usually** begins with a **subordinate conjunction** ...

Common Subordinate Conjunctions

although

because

since

even though

whether

until

unless

while

before

as long as

in order that

whenever

Review the 6 attributes of a healthy thesis statement?

- **assertion** (opinion)
- **takes a stand** (arguable)
- **narrow**
- **main idea**
- **specific**
- **one main point**

Weak Thesis Statements ... Why?

- Foreign language is required in high schools.
- Professional athletes make a lot of money.
- Watching a movie at home is different from going to the theater to see a film.
- Reading romance novels is a waste of time.
- Intelligence tests are used extensively in some elementary schools.
- Women are usually awarded custody of children in divorce settlements.

Practice Time

Rewrite the following into STRONG thesis statements. Remember that each statement must include ...

- 1) a statement of fact or the topic of the paper
- 2) the point of your paper, usually your opinion or belief

It makes sense to drive a compact car.

The cost of a community college is low.

There is a shortage in the nursing profession.

Men as well as women suffer sexual stereotypes.

- 1. What is the topic you want to write about?**
- 2. What is your main opinion on this topic?**
- 3. What is the strongest reason supporting your opinion?**
- 4. What is another strong reason supporting your opinion?**
- 5. What is the main argument against your opinion?**

Even though 5 , 2 because 4 and 3 .

Even though 5 , 2 because 4 and 3 .

2 because 4 .

While 5 , 2 .

1. What is the topic you want to write about?

twins

2. What is your main opinion on this topic?

twins are closer than siblings

3. What is the strongest reason supporting your opinion?

twins spend almost minute together since birth

4. What is another strong reason supporting your opinion?

twins develop their own language

5. What is the main argument against your opinion?

some siblings who are not twins are also very close