

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is typically a single sentence that summarises the **main idea** of your paper and explains **what you are going to say about a topic**. You do not need a perfect thesis statement before you start writing your paper as it is likely that you will tweak the statement as you write.

Why do I need it?

- ☑ To inform the reader of the topic and your specific argument
- ☑ To help you better organise and develop the content of your paper (the rest of your paper will present information to support your argument or analysis of the topic)

What should it do?

- ☑ Summarise the main points you will address
- ☑ Introduce your perspective of a topic
- ☑ Make a claim that is not too broad that can be supported throughout the paper
- ☑ Develop an interest in the mind of the reader so they continue reading

Steps to developing a thesis statement

1. Decide on a topic, unless it has already been assigned by your professor/instructor
2. Do some preliminary research to obtain an overview of the relevant aspects related to the topic you wish to write about
3. Use your findings to narrow down some of the areas you want to discuss
4. Write down some keywords/short phrases that will help you clearly communicate the main idea(s) of your paper. For example, a paper on the benefits of recycling plastic might include keywords such as: environment, waste reduction, reusability, conserving energy
5. Use the research and ideas you have generated to help you write your thesis statement

General Rules

1. Make a solid statement, don't just state a fact

Fact: Attendance at community centres has increased.

Thesis: Community centres are attracting more people due to the support services they offer.

2. A thesis is the main idea, not the title of the paper

Title: The effect of the Internet on society.

Thesis: Continuing developments of the Internet are having a great impact upon communication methods used in modern society.

3. A thesis should provide a discussion

Not Debatable: Excessive drinking is bad for you.

Debatable: Excessive consumption of alcohol has detrimental effects on your health and can lead to liver problems, heart disease, and weight gain.

4. A thesis statement narrows down the topic

Broad: One-hit wonders have made history.

Narrow: Using catchy hooks, one-hit wonders in pop music have managed to solidify their places in music history.

5. A thesis statement is specific

Vague: J K Rowling is a great author.

Specific: J K Rowling's stories advance the thriller genre by addressing societal issues and discussing gender justice.

What are the different kinds of thesis statements?

Argumentative Thesis Statement: is used to make a clear claim or assertion, which is supported with evidence to demonstrate that it is true. The following example would expect the paper to explore how the arts stimulate cognitive development and provide high school students with an outlet for creative expression.

Example: High schools should include the arts in their curriculum to stimulate students' cognitive development and allow them an outlet for creative expression

Explanatory (Expository) Thesis Statement: is used to explain a topic, what you will discuss about the topic, and which parts of the topic will be reflected upon. The following thesis statement implies the paper will describe how technology is used by undergraduate students in three areas: social interaction, completion of academic papers, and to access information online.

Example: Undergraduate students make use of technology in a variety of ways, including social interaction, completion of academic papers, and to access information online.

Analytical Thesis Statement: is used to present the issue or idea you are analysing, what aspects of the issue you are evaluating, and how you will be presenting your findings. The following example would analyse McDonald's advertising campaign for children and describe the ways in which these campaigns misrepresent the nutritional content of Happy Meals.

Example: McDonald's advertising campaign for children reveals serious issues regarding the misrepresentation of the nutritional content of McDonald's Happy Meals.

Ask yourself...

- Does my thesis make a specific claim about the topic?
- Does my thesis contain the central idea that focuses my argument?
- Does my thesis address a debatable topic?
- Can I support my thesis with the research available?
- Does my thesis really reflect my final argument?