Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement expresses the main idea or controlling argument in an academic paper. It is your unique claim about the topic you’ll explore throughout the rest of the paper.

What information should I include in my thesis?

- A thesis is often expressed in one or two clear, concise sentences and is usually found at the end of an essay’s introductory paragraph.
- It is important for a thesis to address why a topic is important. Hint: Many thesis statements contain words like although, because, however, or since.
- The length and placement of a thesis statement may vary according to an assignment’s specifications. A thesis statement may be less important in narrative essays, but crucial in a research paper or persuasive essay.

What if I’m not required to have a thesis?

A thesis is always useful in planning your paper. You may still want to write a thesis to narrow down your main idea, even if this statement won’t be required for your final draft.
**Parts of a thesis statement:**

1) The **specific topic** you are writing about.
2) Your **analysis** or interpretation of that topic.

**A strong thesis should...**

- Introduce your distinctive **perspective** on a topic.
- Summarize the **main points** you will address throughout the paper.
- Assert your position on one side of an argument.
- Make a claim that is not too broad, but can be supported by specific examples throughout the paper.
- Prompt your audience to continue reading.

**A thesis should NOT...**

- Restate an obvious or known fact.
  (Ex: Homelessness is a problem in America.)
- Blatantly announce what the writer hopes to accomplish in the paper.
  (Ex: I am going to write about homelessness in this essay.)

**How a thesis helps a writer:**

- Reminds you to stay on topic.
  **Hint:** You may want to highlight your thesis and refer back to it periodically as you write.
- Guides and directs your thoughts.
- Assists in the development of topic sentences for each paragraph.
- Suggests a coherent organization or structure for the rest of the paper.
How a thesis helps readers:

- Prepares them for what to expect in the rest of the paper.
- Summarizes the topic for their understanding.
- Sparks interest in your topic and involves them in the text.

An effective thesis will do more than state what your reader already knows. The statement doesn’t necessarily need to be controversial, but it should reveal your unique interpretation of a topic.

Types of thesis statements:

**Working Thesis**
This is your first concept of the thesis as you begin your rough draft. You can refer back to the working thesis when revising and alter it as you narrow your topic. A thesis may evolve many times throughout the writing process. *Don’t get too attached to your working thesis!*

**Final Thesis**
This is the version of your thesis that readers will see. It is the culmination of the ideas incorporated into your working thesis. It successfully conveys the main idea of your paper.

Questions to ask yourself when developing a thesis statement:

- What is the main idea I am trying to convey to my readers?
- What evidence will I use to support my claim?
  - How can I exceed my readers’ expectations about this topic?
Q: Is this a strong thesis?

Many people choose to attend college after high school.

A: No. This statement is too broad. It is merely a statement of fact, not an arguable point. Also, it announces the topic, but it does not show how it will be analyzed.

Effective thesis:

Because college coursework is more difficult than high school coursework, students will not succeed in higher education unless they change their study habits.

This is a strong thesis because it is an arguable assertion. It analyzes a specific aspect of a more general topic, and it presents the writer’s opinion.