

## General Thesis Statement Tips

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- A thesis statement generally consists of two parts:
  - Your topic
  - The analysis, explanation(s), or assertion(s) that you're making about the topic.
- A thesis statement is a very **specific** statement -- it should cover only what you want to discuss in your paper, and be supported with specific evidence.
- Generally, a thesis statement appears at the end of the first paragraph of an essay, so that readers will have a clear idea of what to expect as they read. Also, a thesis should be short, one or two sentences in length.
- The kind of thesis statement you write will depend on what kind of paper you're writing. For example, in some kinds of writing, such as narratives or descriptions, a thesis statement is less important, but you may still want to provide some kind of statement in your first paragraph that helps to guide your reader through your paper.
- As you write and revise your paper, it's okay to change your thesis statement -- sometimes you don't discover what you really want to say about a topic until you've started (or finished) writing! Just make sure that your "final" thesis statement accurately shows what will happen in your paper.

### Expository (Explanatory) Thesis Statements

In an expository paper, you are explaining something to your audience. An expository thesis statement will tell your audience:

- what you are going to explain to them
- the categories you are using to organize your explanation
- the order in which you will be presenting your categories

Example: The lifestyles of barn owls include hunting for insects and animals, building nests, and raising their young. A reader who encountered that thesis would expect the paper to explain how barn owls hunt for insects, build nests, and raise young.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an expository thesis statement:

- What am I trying to explain?
- How can I categorize my explanation into different parts?
- In what order should I present the different parts of my explanation?

### Argumentative Thesis Statements

In an argumentative paper, you are making a claim about a topic and justifying this claim with reasons and evidence. This claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. However, this claim must be a statement that people could possibly disagree with, because the goal of your paper is to convince your audience that your claim is true based on your presentation of your reasons and evidence. An argumentative thesis statement will tell your audience:

- your claim or assertion
- the reasons/evidence that support this claim
- the order in which you will be presenting your reasons and evidence

Questions to ask yourself when writing an argumentative thesis statement:

- What is my claim or assertion?
- What are the reasons I have to support my claim or assertion?
- In what order should I present my reasons?

A well-constructed thesis has a topic and an **assertion**.

**Excellent Examples:**

1. The death penalty **should be abolished**.
2. Near death experiences signify that an afterlife exists.
3. Female students learn better in all-women colleges.
4. Televised news stories about suicide trigger a significant rise in teen suicides.

**Poor Examples:**

1. In this paper I am going to show how the ancient Egyptians were able to build so many huge temples and tombs.

Although this statement has a topic, there is no assertion. The writer is indicating an expectation that will be fulfilled, not an assertion to be proved.

Possible thesis: The Egyptians built their temples with the assistance of extraterrestrial beings.

2. What are the major characteristics attributed to adult children of alcoholics.?

A question cannot fulfill requirements of a thesis statement because it means only that an answer will follow. Remember! A thesis answers a question!

Possible thesis: Low self-esteem, compulsive behavior, and emotional distance characterizes adult children of alcoholics.

3. "Big Brother" aspects of government

This topic not only fails to express an attitude toward the topic but is written as an incomplete sentence.

Possible thesis: Individuals need to guard their right to privacy as computers make federal government information gathering, storage, and dissemination increasingly easy and more extensive.

4. Many elementary schools are going to a year-round schedule.

This is not a thesis but a statement of fact.

Possible thesis: Year-round schools can help reduce overcrowding in classrooms and will benefit student, parents, and school staff in general.

5. People should not smoke because it is unhealthy.

Technically, this a thesis because it does have a topic and an assertion, if somewhat vague. But the assertion is

weak. Few would disagree that smoking is unhealthy; too many studies over the last thirty years have proved that smoking is detrimental to one's health.

Possible thesis: There is a significant correlation between teen smoking and academic achievement.

6. Richard Nixon was impeached because of the Watergate scandal.

This qualifies as a thesis, it has topic and an assertion, but its based in false information! Nixon was not impeached, he resigned and was later pardoned by President Gerald Ford.