

## The Thesis Statement: What It Is and How to Write One

A thesis statement is a sentence that clearly names a subject, what your position is on it, and your reasons for your position. It tells your audience the point and purpose of your essay in a statement—not a question—about one debatable or arguable idea. It should also provide a preview of the order of ideas in the body of your paper.

### What is your purpose? Analysis? Exposition? Argument? Persuasion?

To decide how to draft your thesis, first consider the purpose of your essay:

In **analytical** writing, you take apart an issue or idea, examine its parts, show how they relate to each other, and evaluate them or draw a conclusion from them. The **analytical thesis** statement presents the main elements of this thought process so that your reader is prepared to follow your line of reasoning.

Example:

With every aspect of our lives—from healthcare, education, and government to shopping and dating—inextricably linked to the Internet, we have lost the freedom to choose whether or not to be online.

Following such a thesis, the reader is prepared to read the author's exploration and analysis of the role the internet is playing in healthcare, education, government, shopping, and dating—in that order—and what they have decided it all means for personal freedom.

With **expository** writing, you are explaining your topic to your readers, informing them of details they may not have noticed about something familiar, or presenting discoveries or innovations that might be totally new to your audience. An **expository thesis** makes a point and answers the questions *Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?*

Example:

Researchers have developed a way to chemically influence neurons in a way that could one day turn IMAX theaters into drug dealers: after a chemical was injected into live rats' brains, exposure to a certain color of laser light produced pleasure comparable to eating food or having sex.

This kind of expository thesis is about a topic that involves technical elements that would need to be explained to a general audience, such as the procedures the researchers used and the reasons motivating them to pursue this line of investigation, as well as arguing the societal implications of this discovery.

An **argument thesis** is any claim—opinion, proposal, evaluation, cause-and-effect relationship, or interpretation of events or texts—with supporting evidence to show the validity of the claim. In other words, it is a sentence that says *what* you have decided about a topic and *why* you have made that decision.

Example:

Bellevue College should provide secure sleep pods for the many sleep-deprived students who commute long distances to attend classes on campus, as lack of sleep leads to accidents, loss of productivity, and illnesses ranging from colds and flu to depression and diabetes.

An argumentative thesis especially needs to be about something debatable and usually has a substantial number of reasons to support your claim. It may also include elements of a contrasting point of view that you are arguing against.

A **persuasive thesis** is an argument thesis that states a claim about something debatable and lays out the supporting reasons in a way that will convince readers they should agree with your position. It usually appeals to both the logical reasoning and the emotions of your audience.

Example:

Having sleep pods at Bellevue College would provide safe, secure, cost-effective means to compensate for the sleep deprivation that student life induces, potentially saving lives.

To have the best chance of being persuasive, you need to consider who your intended audience will be, what they care about, and what would be most convincing to them, and use that information as the basis of your thesis.

## Thesis Sentence Structure

A thesis may take any sentence form, but templates can help in the drafting process:

If you are given a question prompt, for example, then your thesis should **directly answer the question and give supporting reasons**. Use the words of the question to form your thesis.

Example:

(Prompt) What is the significance of the green light in *The Great Gatsby*?

The green light in *The Great Gatsby* signifies . . .

Another thesis template **starts with the argument, then gives the rationale** and supporting examples in this kind of sentence structure (Robson):

\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_, [which is/as] illustrated in \_\_\_\_\_.

*Dancing with the Stars* should be cancelled because it is repetitive, overwrought, and there is no longer an audience for it, as illustrated in negative reviews, lower numbers of voters, and reduced Nielsen ratings.

Finally, one of the most popular thesis formats is a **contrasting introduction followed by an independent clause that argues a claim**. Begin the sentence with an opposing view or what opponents of your position have said, then state your position and your reasons for it, with this sentence structure and punctuation:

Subordinate contrasting introduction, independent clause that argues your thesis.

### Examples of the Contrasting Intro, Independent Clause Thesis:

Although research has linked heart disease and diabetes to the typical diet in the United States, the American food industry has ignored medical evidence and continues to market dangerous products to poorly educated consumers.

Despite the dark theme that questions whether we are the authors of our own lives or if others have the right to choose for us, *Stranger than Fiction* has perhaps the widest appeal of any Will Ferrell movie.

Even though its detractors find it repetitive, overwrought, and less than engaging, *Dancing with the Stars* has found a time-tested formula that continues to attract American audiences, and ABC should not cancel it.

By starting with your opponents' views and ending with your own, you can lead readers to remember your argument more effectively.

## Is Your Thesis Strong?

Once you have a sentence drafted, test the strength of your working thesis by asking yourself a few questions:

- Is the sentence just a statement of fact, or does it make an arguable point?
- Can a reader get an idea of what supporting points will be explored in the body of the paper just by reading the thesis?
- Does the thesis have enough ideas or perspectives in it? Could you explore aspects of your thesis in four or more body paragraphs without repeating yourself?
- Does it answer the “So what?” question? In other words, have you shown a connection between your topic and something readers would care about?

Your thesis statement can be a resource for ideas as you write your first draft. Make sure the thesis and body paragraphs are related throughout the paper and revise as necessary. Ultimately, if you have a point to make that you actually care about, your thesis and your essay will be stronger as a result.

## Bibliography

Robson, Alex. “[How to Write a Thesis Statement in 4 Minutes.](#)” *YouTube*, 28 May 2012.  
Scribbr. “[How to Write a Strong Thesis Statement.](#)” *YouTube*, 10 Jan. 2020.

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