

Drafting the Paper

Thesis Statements



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What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is the main idea of an essay. It consists of the **topic** of the essay and the writer's **claim** about the topic that will be proven throughout the essay. The thesis usually appears at the end of the introduction, often as the last sentence, and lets the reader know what to expect.

Topic + Claim = Thesis

Developing a Thesis Statement

Topic Selection - Before you can write a thesis, you need a **topic**. Sometimes you are assigned a topic by your professor, while other times you need to choose your own. The topic is the first part of a thesis. The topic is sometimes referred to as the "WHAT" of your essay.

Pre-writing/Brainstorming - The second part of a thesis is your **claim**. Before you can write a thesis, you need to do some analysis of your topic to determine what you want to say about it. What interests you about the topic? What is your paper going to attempt to prove? Why is it important? This is sometimes referred to as the "SO WHAT?"

Working Thesis - A good place to begin is by developing a "working thesis." A working thesis is simply a draft of your thesis statement. In other words, you make your best attempt at writing a thesis, making sure to get your **topic** and **claim** in it. Remember that you may change or revise your thesis as you go through the writing process, and that's okay!

Make sure your thesis is:

Debatable	➔	Can a reader disagree?
Specific and focused, not simply stating intent or facts	➔	Is the statement too broad or have you stated a fact that cannot be argued?
Clear as to the essay's direction, emphasis, and scope, not vague or narrowly focused	➔	Can the reader predict the overall point of the paper from the thesis?
Able to answer so what, how, or why	➔	Is the thesis making a point?
Without personal pronouns such as: "I think" or "I believe"	➔	Unless directed by your professor, take any "I" statement out



Remember, it is okay to revise and change your thesis as you write!



Thesis Statements, Cont'd

Thesis Writing Strategies

Prompt Strategy:

Some professors may give you a writing prompt. Use the prompt to identify key words and turn them into a question. For example:

Prompt - Your paper should describe the mood and theme of "Sticks," by George Saunders, and what the elements contribute to the story.

Key Words - Mood & Theme.

Question - How do the elements of mood and theme in "Sticks" contribute to the story?

Answer - The father's self-imprisonment behind his decorative bars creates a theme of entrapment within the story.

Mood

Theme

Question Strategy

Some professors may give you a broad topic or let you choose your own topic. For broad topics, you may narrow down your ideas by asking progressively more specific questions. Begin to answer these questions and create more specific ones through research. Use your answers to specific questions to create a thesis. For example:

General Topic - Fairy tales and child development.

Question - Are traditional fairy tales appropriate for children?

Specific Question - Are the dark themes and conclusions found in traditional fairy tales beneficial to children?

Thesis - The dark themes of traditional fairytales teaches children how to understand and deal with internal fears and insecurities.

They Say/I Say Model:

This model incorporates different viewpoints and responds to them. Start with the phrases "they say" and "I say." For your final thesis, revise the statement without those phrases.

Rough Draft - *They say*, "Cell phones distract students." *I say* cell phones can help students learn.

They say

I say

Final Thesis - Many parents argue that cell phones are simply a distraction for students, but educators understand that utilizing new mobile technologies can turn cell phones into indispensable learning tools.

Other Templates

The implication of _____ is _____
Even though _____ actually _____
I believe* _____ because _____
In _____ (Title), _____ (Author) uses _____

*after drafting your thesis statement remove "I believe"