

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is a sentence or sentences which summarize the main idea or ideas of your paper and clearly expresses what it is you are going to say about your topic. Your statement identifies what topic will be discussed and the purpose of your paper.

The thesis statement--

- o covers exactly the topic you want to talk about, no more and no less.
- o lets your readers know what to expect.
- o usually appears in your paper's introductory paragraph.
- o helps you better organize and develop the content of your paper.

The rest of your paper presents information you have gathered, organized and developed to support your point of view, explanation or analysis of the topic.

How do I develop a thesis statement?

Developing a thesis statement is an orderly process:

- o Decide on a topic or subject area. Some topics may be assigned by your instructor. Others may be your choice. [See [Choosing a Topic](#) Handout]
- o Do some preliminary research on the topic to obtain an overview of the relevant aspects of your subject area. This investigation will help you to narrow down what you want to write about and help determine how you will approach your subject.
- o Once you have decided what your topic will be and have done some research, consider what wording will clearly and accurately express the main idea(s) or concept(s) you will discuss in your paper.
- o Write your thesis as a statement, not a question.
- o Writers may sometimes change their purpose or views during the research and writing process. Revising your thesis statement is OK as long as your final thesis statement is consistent with what is presented in your paper.

Are there different kinds of thesis statements?

Your thesis statement will depend on what kind of paper you are writing. What is the paper's purpose?—to convince? to explain? to analyze?

- o **Argumentative Thesis Statement**
An argumentative paper takes a position or makes an assertion or a claim and supports or justifies the position, assertion, or claim with reasons and evidence. An argumentative paper seeks to convince the reader that your position, assertion or claim is true. An argumentative thesis tells your reader what your argument is and what supporting evidence or reasons you will present. *For example, "Smoking should be banned in all public places."*
- o **Explanatory (Expository) Thesis Statement**
An explanatory paper explains or acquaints your reader with something (your topic). An explanatory thesis statement tells your reader what it is you will explain and what aspects or parts of the topic will be considered. *For example, "Chinese labor played an important role in western railroad expansion."*
- o **Analytical Thesis Statement**
An analytical paper evaluates an issue or idea, usually by considering its various aspects or parts, and presents this evaluation to the reader. An analytical thesis statement tells your reader what issue or idea you are analyzing, what aspects of the issue or idea you are evaluating and how you will be presenting your analyses. *For example, "An analysis of the ferruginous hawk reveals two kinds of flight patterns: patterns related to hunting prey and patterns related to courtship."*

Links:

Owl Online Writing Lab: Writing a Thesis Statement

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_thesis.html

LEO: Literacy Education Online: Thesis Statement

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/thesisstatement.html>