

Thesis Statements: An Overview

What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is one or two sentences, typically placed at the end of the introduction paragraph, that encompasses the full argument or analysis in a paper. It presents the main idea and outlines the main points of a paper. Think of it as a "road map," guiding the reader on the journey the essay will take.

What type of essay are you writing?

Analytical

These papers break down an issue or idea into its component parts and evaluate an idea.

Expository

An expository paper explains a topic to the audience. These papers may also be referred to as explanatory papers, compare/contrast essays, or cause/effect essays.

Argumentative

These papers make a claim and then justify that claim with supporting evidence. The claim could be an opinion, causal argument, or textual interpretation. The goal of this paper is to convince the audience the claim is true based on the evidence provided.

Narrative

This type of writing conveys a story with characters, conflict, and a plot. A narrative paper typically does not have a thesis statement, but it could be helpful in the exposition of the story.

Steps to writing a thesis statement:

1. Start with a big topic and identify the subject of your paper
2. Determine the topic you want to focus on within that subject
3. Ask yourself a question about that topic
4. Answer the question you posed within one sentence
5. Use a tool like a thesis generator to help
6. Revise your statement (if needed) as your argument develops

Questions to check the strength of a thesis:

1. Does it take a position?
2. Is it specific?
3. Is it arguable?
4. Can it be supported with evidence?

Analytical

Though World War I had many different causes, popularized nationalism fostered a sense of defensiveness and aggression that ultimately led to the war's beginning.

The paper that follows should...analyze the beginning of WWI and explain how nationalism contributed to it.

Argumentative

At least 15 percent of the federal budget should be spent on researching renewable energy sources and helping encourage businesses to switch to clean technology.

The paper that follows should...present the argument and give evidence to support the claim that the federal government should take a more active role in environmental issues.

Expository

The Amazon rainforest provides the human race with innumerable resources such as food and medicine.

The paper that follows should...explain how the rainforest provides the aforementioned resources and give more detail about those resources.



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