

Introduction: Writing a thesis statement

Week 4 Lesson-3

By the end of this lesson you will:

1

Understand what a thesis statement is

2

Be able to explain the purpose of a thesis statement

3

Know tips for writing a strong thesis statement

4

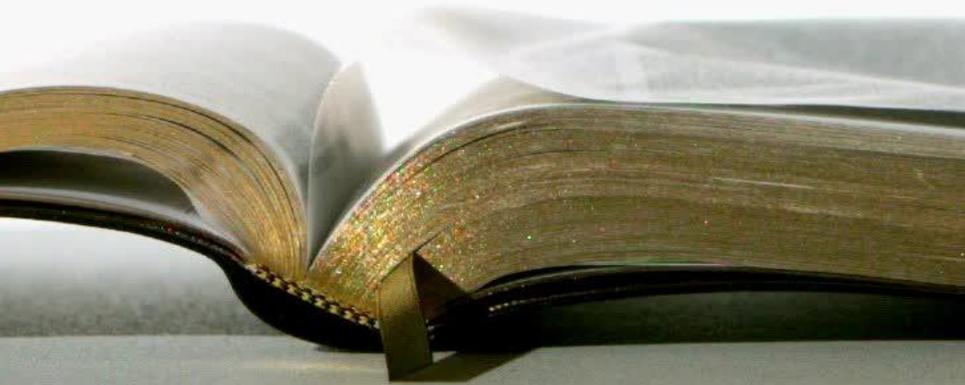
Be able to write a thesis statement for your essay

Why do we need a thesis statement?

- Thesis statement = **the spoiler for the essay**

A thesis statement benefits a paper in two ways:

1. It lets your reader know what to expect.
2. It helps you (the writer) keep the paper on track.



Four Characteristics of an Effective Thesis Statement

1. It states **your topic and focus**, which answer your research question.
2. It gives **an overview of your supporting points**, which are logically connected to your focus.
3. It gives enough information **without too much detail**.
4. It uses correct grammar and precise vocabulary.



The focus can be:

Problems and solutions
Comparison: similarities and differences
Causes and consequences
Advantages and disadvantages and etc.

- The thesis statement you develop is your **working thesis**. This means it's still **tentative**. Further along in the writing process, you may discover that you need to revise your thesis statement because of additional information you find.

Your thesis statement is different from your topic. A topic is a short phrase that states the general subject of your paper, such as:

Taking risks

A thesis statement sets up the framework for your entire essay. It tells the reader not only your topic, but also the **focus**, **or what you plan to say about that topic**, such as:

Biological needs, social environment, and psychological satisfaction **are three reasons** why people take risks.

A thesis statement is a concise one-sentence answer to your research question.

Research Question: How are expectations of marriage in the United States and India similar or different?

The focus of this research question is a comparison (similar or different) of the topic (expectations of marriage in two countries).

Thesis Statement: Belief in romantic love, the division of family responsibilities, and attitudes toward divorce **are three differences between American and Indian expectations of marriage.**

1. What is the first difference? What will the first paragraph be about?
2. What is the second difference? What will the second paragraph be about?
3. What is the third difference? What will the third paragraph be about?

NOW YOU TRY

Rough Outline 1

Research Question: Should marijuana be legal?

Focus of Research Question: Argument

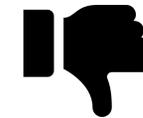
Answers to Research Question:

1. Damages the brain
2. Causes memory loss
3. Leads to birth defects

Look at each rough outline and research question. Then, decide whether each thesis statement is a good answer to the research question.

- Does it include an appropriate focus?
- Does it include an overview of supporting points?

Thesis Statement A: Marijuana should not be legal because it is too dangerous.



Thesis Statement B: The use of marijuana and alcohol should be legal.



Thesis Statement C: Using marijuana should be against the law because it damages the brain and leads to birth defects.



Research Question: Why do people become homeless?

Focus of Research

Question: Causes

Answers to Research

- Question:**
1. Lack of affordable housing
 2. Inadequate public assistance
 3. Drug and alcohol problems
 4. Breakdown of the family
 5. Mental health problems

Thesis Statement: The lack of affordable housing, inadequate public assistance, and the breakdown of the family are three causes of homelessness.

An effective thesis statement includes **this overview of your supporting points, so the reader knows what you will discuss and **how your ideas are organised**.**

As a reader, you would expect the paper to follow the order of the supporting points as they are presented in the thesis statement.

1. First, a section that discusses the problem poor people have in finding housing they can afford.
2. Second, a discussion of the inadequate amount of money the government provides to support poor people.
3. Third, a discussion of how family breakups can lead to homelessness.

Research Topic: Solid waste pollution

Research questions: What are the reasons and consequences of solid waste pollution? How can they be solved?

Answers to research questions:

Reasons and consequences: Landfills contaminating earth

Solutions: recycling, reusing and use of biotechnologies; to change people's attitude towards the waste they make

Thesis statement: This essay focuses first on the problem of solid waste pollution from environmental and social perspectives and explain the basic steps that can be done by factories to decrease the amount of waste like recycling, reusing and some biotechnologies; and then argues that the change in people's attitude towards the waste they make to be the best solution to keep the planet from pollution.

EXPLANATION

Four empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing an explanation.

NOW YOU TRY

For each thesis statement below, circle the topic and underline the focus.

- Three major factors cause teenagers to commit murder: the influence of the media, the easy availability of guns, and the lack of family contact.
- The death penalty should be abolished for two reasons: it might kill innocent people, and it is unfairly applied to the poor and minorities.
- Two results of promoting birth control are increased education for women and greater economic opportunity for everyone.

Work in groups. What is the problem with the following thesis statements? How would you improve them?

1. The United States has a lot of crime.
2. Three types of crime have been increasing in US cities.
3. Making the United Nations into a law-enforcing agency with the power to enforce regulations about energy use, encourage households to install insulation, force farmers to recycle water, develop solar power, establish maritime laws to regulate deep-water fishing, and pass laws against logging in the Amazon are some of the ways the damaging effects of global warming can be controlled, although it is impossible to stop them completely.

LACK OF FOCUS	LACK OF SUPPORTING POINTS	TOO MUCH INFORMATION
The United States has a lot of crime.	Three types of crime have been increasing in US cities.	Making the United Nations into a law-enforcing agency with the power to enforce regulations about energy use, encouraging households to install insulation, forcing farmers to recycle water, developing solar power, establishing maritime laws to regulate deep-water fishing, and passing laws against logging in the Amazon are some of the ways the damaging effects of global warming can be controlled, although it is impossible to completely stop them.
<p>Will the essay discuss the causes of crimes or their effects?</p> <p>Will the essay contrast and compare the crime rate now with 10 years ago?</p> <p>What the essay is about?</p>	What kind of crimes?	too much information; (This is like a paragraph about the topic.)
Better Thesis Statement: Crime today is more widespread among many economic groups, more violent, and more costly to society than it was ten years ago.	Better Thesis Statement: Three types of crime have been increasing in US cities: personal assault, car robbery, and home burglary.	Better Thesis Statement: Creating stricter regulations worldwide and encouraging conservation of resources are two good ways to slow the effects of global warming.

Group work

Thesis Statement of a Problem & Solution Essay

With your group, choose one thesis statement and answer the following questions. You have 10 minutes.

1. What is the topic of the essay? What is the focus of the essay?
2. Which two perspectives will be used to analyze the topic (problem)?
3. What are the solutions that will be suggested and evaluated?
4. How will the essay be organised (What each paragraph will be about?)



Supporting points

Present and explain your answers to the whole group.

Group A. This essay will analyse gender discrimination from social and economic perspectives and suggest encouraging women's participation and leadership in politics and imposing strict policy measures for equal pay as the appropriate solutions to the problem.

Group B. Society should develop an awareness of factors that motivate children to act violently, such as family problems and the influence of media, and also consider ways to prevent juvenile violence, including better support for parents and improved monitoring of media.

Group C. This essay examines the social and emotional effects of bullying at school and argues that families should work together with schools to enhance students' emotional intelligence and build a positive school climate to prevent school bullying.

Sample answer: Group A

Topic: Gender discrimination

Focus: Problems and Solutions

Two perspectives that the author will look at (paragraphs 1-2): social and economic

Solutions (paragraphs 3-4) :

1. encouraging women's participation and leadership in politics
2. imposing strict policy measures for equal pay as the appropriate solutions to the problem.

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE (Additional activity)

Write the introduction of your essay and make sure that it has all the main elements of introduction:

- **Background info**
- **Rationale**
- **Thesis statement. Ensure that:**
 - It shows **what** (states the topic) and **how** the essay will focus on by limiting the discussion to specific perspectives.
 - It gives an overview of the essay's supporting points and indicates how the essay will be organized.
 - It uses correct grammar and precise vocabulary
 - **You may include optional elements such as: Hook and Definition.**

Useful language

Reporting verbs:

Consider
Discuss
Examine
Explain
Focus on
Analyse
Provide
Explore
Report
Investigate
Suggest

To talk about solutions:

Address
Tackle
Solve

Introduction quiz

- Go to Moodle and take the quiz about the Introduction paragraph structure.
- The quiz consists of 20 questions in total:
multiple-choice questions
- You have 30 minutes to complete the quiz.

References

- Dollahite, N. E. & Haun, J. (2012). *Sourcework: Academic Writing From Sources*. Heinle/Cengage Learning