Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is a brief, but clear sentence that provides your reader with a roadmap for your paper. It is always found at the beginning of the paper, usually at the end of the first paragraph. For longer papers, the thesis statement may be found at the end of an introduction section and, very rarely, may extend to two sentences.

For an ***argumentative paper***, your thesis statement will clearly state your disputable stance on the topic and lay out your supporting reasons.

Bad Example: J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* is a classic American novel.

This is only telling us what text will be explored in the paper.

Better Example: In *Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger constructs Holden Caulfield as a socially alienated character.

This adds a focus but does not offer how or why it's important.

Best Example: In *Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger constructs Holden Caulfield as a socially alienated character who struggles with mental illness due to his isolation from society and self.

This clearly states a topic with a focus and considers the stakes.

For an ***expository paper***, your thesis statement reveals what you will explain in your paper.

Bad Example: The Boston Tea Party was the most important act of civil disobedience in the American colony because it protested unjust taxation without representation and was therefore the main cause of the Revolutionary War.

This thesis expresses a personal opinion, which should not be included in this type of thesis. It's also too wordy and specific.

Good Example: The Boston Tea Party was a significant act of civil disobedience that galvanized Americans around the issue of taxation without representation and helped spark the Revolutionary War.

This thesis clearly expresses the topic that will be discussed without too much detail.

For an ***analytical paper***, your thesis statement will break down the issue at hand and clearly begin to evaluate it.

Bad Example: The economic situation is bad.

This is too vague and provides no supporting idea to build upon in the paper.

Good Example: The tax policies of the current administration threaten to reduce the tax burden on the middle class by sacrificing education and health-care programs.

This thesis provides a specific noun (tax policies), an active/strong verb (threaten), and reason.

Check your thesis!

Is it…

- ✓ Answering the question?
- ✓ Presenting a debatable position?
- ✓ Specific and focused?
- ✓ Important enough or worthy of exploration?
- ✓ Supported throughout your paper?
- ✓ Clearly worded?

If not, you may want to rewrite your thesis until all of the above questions are met. If you are still struggling, you may wish to consult the following sources for further assistance:

References:

- http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/thesis-statements/
- https://teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/cavalcade/pdf/feb2004/p36-37_thesis_exp_essay.pdf
- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/
- *Writing Analytically* by Rosenwasser and Stephen