

Writing a Thesis

What is a thesis?

- A thesis is (typically one) sentence or sentences that express the main ideas of a paper.
 - By reading a thesis alone, a reader should be able to tell what the core of the paper is about and the writer's stance toward it.
- It often serves to let the reader know your purpose for writing a paper: it is the core of what you wish to communicate.
- A thesis sets expectations for the reader about what they will read in the rest of the paper.
- They often directly answer the question posed by the paper in the introduction (or in the prompt). They sometimes pose a solution to a problem, take a position within a debate, or explain a phenomenon.

Parts of a thesis

- **Thesis statements consist of two parts:** your opinion (or the specific thing you're trying to say about the topic) and your reasons for your opinions.
 - *OPINION*+EVIDENCE= THESIS STATEMENT
 - Example:
 - *Social media is a useful invention because it facilitates networking and connection instantly across great distances.*
 - Here the *opinion* "social media is a useful invention," is supported by the evidence: "it facilitates networking and connection instantly across great distances."
 - Note: ***Some instructors prohibit theses of the form, "Assertion X, because reasons/main ideas A, B, C." Instead try to think of a more general statement that covers A, B, and C.***

What a thesis is not

- A thesis is *not* a summary of the topic you are analyzing or researching.
- A thesis is *not* a mere statement of fact. It is something a reasonable person could disagree with. You should be able to imagine an opposing point of view.

Where do you put your thesis?

- A thesis is often, but not always, **at the end of the first paragraph of your paper.**
- It is sometimes broken into two (or three) sentences that **form a separate paragraph, just after your introduction paragraph.**

- *****Ask you instructor which kind is preferred for your assignment.*****

How do you make a thesis?

- Many people revise their thesis statements as they write their papers to better fit the body of what they write.
- **You can begin drafts with a working thesis to provide some direction depending on your research question or your prompt, and then modify it later.**
 - Example:
 - **Research question:** “Should the government enact laws to regulate healthy eating choices?”
 - **Working thesis:** “Government has the responsibility to regulate healthy eating choices because of the rise of chronic diseases.”
 - **Revised thesis:** “In the name of public health and safety, state governments have the responsibility to shape health policies and to regulate healthy eating choices, especially since doing so offers a potentially large social benefit for a relatively small cost.”

General Tips

- **A thesis should match the body of your paper.**
 - If a body paragraph is not talking about what’s in your thesis, either revise the thesis, or revise the paragraph.
 - Similarly, make sure there are no ideas within your thesis that are not discussed in the body of your paper.
- **Use concrete language** to avoid sounding too fuzzy or broad.
 - Make sure that your final thesis is phrased so it is not too broad to what your body paragraphs discuss, and not too narrow so as to exclude your main ideas.
- In general, **the order of ideas in your thesis statement will be the order of ideas in the body of your paper.**

Additional Resources and References

- “How to Write a Thesis Statement” by Writing Tutorial Services at Indiana University Bloomington <https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/how-to-write-a-thesis-statement.html>
- “Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements” by Online Writing Lab at Purdue University https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html
- “Thesis Statements” by the Writing Center University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/thesis-statements/>