

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is the sentence in the first paragraph that guides the writer and reader through the essay. The body of the essay supports the thesis statement with arguments or evidence for the thesis.

The thesis statement should clearly identify an argument. It needs to be a statement that is not only easy to understand, but one that is debatable. A simple statement of fact is a weak thesis statement such as, "In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months." This isn't really something that's a debatable topic.

Additionally, the thesis statement shouldn't be too big or too grand. It'll be hard to cover everything in a thesis statement like:

The federal government should act now on climate change.

The topic is just too large to actually say something new and meaningful. Instead, a more effective thesis statement might be:

Local governments can combat climate change by providing citizens with larger recycling bins and offering local classes about composting and conservation.

This is easier to work with because it's a smaller idea, yet the overall topic which you are interested in, climate change, can be discussed.

Keep in mind that the thesis statement gives the writer's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas.

Consider the following thesis statements

1. When studying a foreign language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.

This thesis statement can be discussed or explained although it is weak. It would be better to include the main ways to improve language use. This way the reader will know what to expect.

2. In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.

This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

3. There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.

This is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement.

Better: Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and therefore, should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

This is a good thesis statement because it clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

Even better: Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages for it produces radioactive waste, comes with potential risk for disaster and requires a high level of technology which is costly. Therefore, nuclear power should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

This thesis statement, which consists of two sentences, is even better than the previous one because it clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power as well as stating the evidence of support i.e. the outline of the essay.

Exercise 1 – Thesis Statement

Directions: Tick the sentences that would make good statements.

1. ☐ School uniforms may be an upfront cost for families, but they still have many advantages.
Poor thesis, too vague. The topic of the essay is announced in this sentence but does not let the reader know the writer's opinion.
2. ☐ The rise in populism on the 2016 political stage was in reaction to increasing globalization, the decline of manufacturing jobs, and the Syrian refugee crisis.
3. ☐ With more and more teens using smartphones and social media, cyber bullying is on the rise. **Poor thesis. This is just a fact and not an opinion.**
4. ☐ With more and more teens using smartphones and social media, cyber bullying is on the rise. Cyber bullying puts a lot of stress on many teens which can cause depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts.
Better thesis. It is specific and provides a frame for the paper.
A thesis statement can be two sentences long
5. ☐ Studies have shown that the use of medicinal marijuana has been helpful to veterans who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Medicinal marijuana prescriptions should be legal in all states and provided to these veterans. Additional medical or therapy services should also be researched and implemented in order to help them re-integrate back into civilian life.
Poor thesis. It is not clear if the essay will be about legalizing marijuana or about therapies for veterans. It lacks focus. Also, too long for a thesis statement.
6. ☐ Studying abroad is one of the most culturally valuable experiences you can have in college. It is the only way to get completely immersed in another language and to learn how other cultures and countries are different from your own.
Better thesis. It clearly expresses a point of view "is the only way to . . ." The thesis does not provide a frame for the essay.