

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 7 AND 8 WRITING/HOMEWORK 9**NAME (FIRST AND LAST):**_____ **GRADE:**_____**THE AMAZING THESIS WORKSHEET**

A “thesis” is the point of your essay, the idea you wish to explain and defend. There are zillions of ways to write a good thesis sentence, but, in general, a thesis contains three elements: a topic, the exact position you are presenting, and a reason(s) why your thesis is valid.

Step One: The Topic

The “topic” of your essay is the general category your essay is about. How do you decide on a topic? Well...What do you have an opinion about? What are some things that interest you? Topics are just general categories-- fad diets, zombies, space exploration, animal rights, etc...

Example of a Topic: School.

Write your topic in the space below

Step Two: The position

What is one thing about your topic that you believe to be true, and that you wish to argue? You may already have a “position” in mind, or you may just have a general topic you know you wish to work with. If you do not yet have a position, making a cluster or a map with your topic in the center is a good way to help yourself find a position. Another good way is to begin a free write, “I’m supposed to write an essay about_____ and see where it takes you. However you get there, write a short statement describing your position in the space below. The position usually has the word should in it but there are many ways to write a position without that word!

Example of a Position: Schools have too many people in them!

Write your position in the space below.

Step Three: The Qualification

Is what you say always true always? Are there exceptions? Are there good reasons why your position may have a downside? How can you make your position have a reality check? What general reasons why your position may have problems can you admit up front? To make absolute statements usually causes your essay's thesis to seem foolishly simplistic. Get real!

Here's a trick: begin your qualification with a word like "although" "even though" or "It is true that. . ." See page 4 of homework for more dependent words that make complex sentences.

Don't worry if it's not a complete sentence. In fact, from the example below, by adding a qualification you have created the beginning of a complex sentence, which is the best kind of thesis statement!

Example Qualification: Although schools of over a thousand students have flourished in America. . .

Write your qualification in the space below.

Step Four: The Reasons

This is sometimes called the "because" clause. In general why do you believe your position to be correct in spite of your qualification? What is the overall good to be gained by agreeing with your position? This is a general statement; your specific reasons will follow in the body of your essay.

Example of a reason: Small school populations lend themselves to building a good community of learners, allow teachers to spend more time working with students and help students make friends.

Write your reason or reasons in the space below.

Step Five: Put them all together.

In one sentence, present your thesis, including a qualification, a reason, and a position. The classic, traditional way of combining is to first present your qualification and topic. This immediately demonstrates your interest in accuracy.

Then present your general reason which demonstrates your thinking process, and finally the punch line-- your position. But there are many ways to arrange and you can try writing your sentence in different ways.

Notice how in the example the qualification comes first, then the reason, and finally the position which has become a specific recommendation which is the position.

Example Thesis: Although schools of over a thousand students have flourished in America, small school populations lend themselves to building a good community of learners, and therefore we should consider limiting school populations to a hundred.

Put yours all together in the space below.

And presto... you've got yourself a *thesis*!

Now write a thesis statement and matching topic sentences that address the thesis for this question: It has been said that television has little real educational value. What is your opinion on this issue? State your opinion and supporting it with convincing reasons. Can TV teach? Should it be used in schools more?

Thesis statement:

Topic sentence Paragraph 1:

Topic sentence Paragraph 2:

Topic sentence Paragraph 3:

Write out a thesis for your future essay:

Planning a Commercial

Directions: Pick what you are advertising. Write a fact and opinion you will share about your item that will persuade people to buy your product.

My commercial is about:

Facts about this product for this commercial are:

Your opinions about this product for this commercial are:

Name: _____

Critical Thinking Exercise 2: Fact or Opinion

Do you always know fact from opinion? It's not so easy to do sometimes. Recent developments in the media have made it easy for groups with political agendas to pretend to be impartial sources, and for fake web sites to offer fake information-and that makes it more important than ever for students to develop critical thinking. **You must use trustworthy sources in your schoolwork!**

If you *don't* learn the difference between fact and opinion, you'll get stuck reading and watching things that only reinforce beliefs and assumptions you already own. And that is the opposite of learning!

Try to determine whether each statement sounds like a fact or an opinion, and discuss with a friend or study partner.

1. My mom is the best mom on earth. _____
2. My dad is taller than your dad. _____
3. My telephone number is difficult to memorize. _____
4. The deepest part of the ocean is 35,813 feet deep. _____
5. Dogs make better pets than turtles. _____

6. Smoking is bad for your health. _____
7. Eighty-five percent of all cases of lung cancer in the U.S. are caused by smoking. _____
8. If you flatten and stretch out a Slinky toy it will be 87 feet long.

9. Slinky toys are fun. _____
10. One out of every hundred American citizens is color blind.

11. Two out of ten American citizens are boring. _____

You will probably find some of the statements easy to judge, but other statements difficult. If you can debate the truthfulness of a statement with your partner, then it's probably an opinion!

CHOOSING A TOPIC

When you select a topic for a persuasive essay, choose one that is controversial. It should not be a topic about which most people have the same opinion. You should also choose a topic that you have a strong opinion about. It should be a topic that you have some personal connection to and that you know something about.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself as you choose your topic:

- 1 Is this really a controversial topic that people will have different opinions about?
- 2 Do I have a strong opinion about this topic?
- 3 Do I have enough knowledge about this topic?
- 4 Do I have a personal connection to this topic?
- 5 Will my readers be interested in this topic?

Which of the following statements are debatable and which are non-debatable?

1. Computers and automation increase unemployment
_____ debatable _____ non-debatable
2. Smoking is harmful to people's health
_____ debatable _____ non-debatable

3. Plants produce oxygen that the world needs to sustain life
_____ debatable _____ non-debatable
4. Australia has some of the most venomous snakes in the world
_____ debatable _____ non-debatable
5. A good education is necessary for a successful and happy life
_____ debatable _____ non-debatable

In the following exercise, identify the problem with each of these potential thesis statements. Is it too broad? Too narrow? An announcement rather than a statement? Does it contain more than one idea? Or do you think the thesis is okay? Write A,B,C,D, or E in the space.

A) Too Broad B) Too Narrow C) Announcement
D) More than One Idea E) Okay

1. Computers have changed our society. _____
- 2 The subject of this paper is gym class. _____
- 3 We must do something about crime. _____
- 4 I will discuss the problem of drug addiction in this essay. _____
- 5 Television programs promote many stereotypes, yet they also can contain positive messages. _____
- 6 When I was a kid, my favorite movie was "Star Wars." _____

THE END