

Thesis Statements

What Is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis or thesis statement is a sentence that identifies the purpose of your essay and captures the central message of the same.

What Is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement:

- ☐ Tells the reader what the essay is about.
 - ☐ Establishes the point of view you are taking.
 - ☐ Gives an indication of the direction of your essay.
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How Do I Develop a Thesis Statement?

- a. Identify a topic.
 - b. Derive a main idea from your topic.
 - c. Compose a draft thesis statement.
 - d. Refine and polish the draft thesis statement.
 - e. Complete the draft thesis statement.
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a. Identify a Topic

Your topic is the subject you will write about.

- ☐ Consider what your assignment asks you to do.
 - ☐ Inform yourself about your topic.
 - ☐ Focus on one aspect of your topic.
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b. Derive a Main Idea from Your Topic

- ❑ Once you have a topic, you will have to decide what the main idea of your essay will be.
 - ❑ This idea will become the centre of your argument (thesis statement) and the unifying thought to which you will relate all your sub-theses.
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c. Compose a Draft Thesis Statement

Your draft thesis statement may begin as a very simple sentence.



d. Refine and Polish the Thesis Statement

To get to your final thesis, you'll need to refine your draft so that it is clear and specific.

- ☐ Ask if your thesis addresses the assignment.
 - ☐ Question each part of your thesis.
 - ☐ Clarify vague phrases and assertions.
 - ☐ Investigate alternatives to your draft thesis.
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e. Complete the Final Thesis Statement

- ❑ As you move through the process of formulating a thesis, you'll need to remember four things:
 - Try to relate the ideas that you have come up with to your thesis.
 - Always keep your assignment in mind. You will be more successful when your thesis and essay responds to the assignment than if it argues a semi-related idea.
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e. Complete the Final Thesis Statement

- Your thesis statement should predict the sub-topics and topic sentences that you will use in your argument.
 - Make sure that you keep the rest of your essay in mind at all times. Change your thesis as your essay evolves, because you do not want your thesis to promise more than your essay actually delivers.
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How to Tell a Strong Thesis from a Weak One

- ❑ A strong thesis statement contains one main idea.
 - If your thesis contains more than one main idea, this may confuse the reader about the subject of your essay.

 - ❑ A strong thesis is specific.
 - A strong thesis tells your reader exactly what your essay is about. Making your thesis specific will also help you restrict your essay to a manageable subject.
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How to Tell a Strong Thesis from a Weak One

- ❑ A strong thesis statement takes some sort of stand.
 - You must tell your reader what you think.

 - ❑ A strong thesis justifies discussion.
 - It should be possible for reasonable people to disagree on the subject you are exploring in your essay.
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Common Errors

Here are four common errors to avoid when formulating your thesis statement:

- ❑ Don't make your thesis merely an announcement of your subject.

- ❑ Example:

- In this essay I will discuss the pros and cons of eating red meat.

Common Errors

- ❑ Don't include expressions like, "in my opinion" or "I believe" in your thesis. These phrases weaken your thesis because they tend to make you sound uncertain.

- ❑ Example:

I believe that the government should provide additional funding for cancer research.

Common Errors

- ❑ Don't simply state a fact or make an observation.

- ❑ Example:

- Every year, thousands of people lose their lives in automobile accidents related to drunk driving.

Practice Exercises

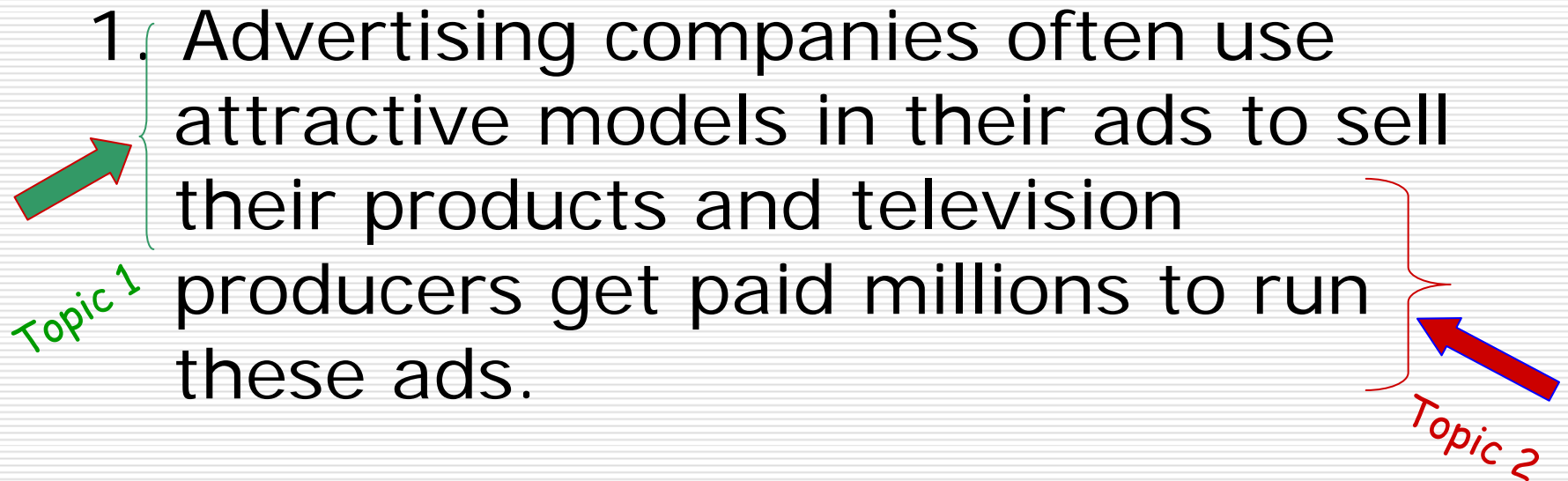
Read each of the following examples and evaluate whether it is a strong or weak thesis statement.

Practice Exercises

1. Advertising companies often use attractive models in their ads to sell their products and television producers get paid millions to run these ads.

This is a weak thesis because it contains more than one main idea.

Practice Exercises

1. Advertising companies often use attractive models in their ads to sell their products and television producers get paid millions to run these ads.
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- The diagram illustrates two topics related to the text. A green arrow labeled 'Topic 1' points to the first part of the sentence: 'Advertising companies often use attractive models in their ads to sell their products and television'. A red arrow labeled 'Topic 2' points to the second part of the sentence: 'producers get paid millions to run these ads.'.

Practice Exercises

2. There are many positive and negative aspects to the use of oral contraceptives as a method of birth control.

This is a weak thesis because it fails to state the author's viewpoint

Practice Exercises

3. The number of persons infected with AIDS in the continent of Africa continues to grow due to the inhabitants' lack of education about the sexually transmitted disease and its methods of prevention.

This is a strong thesis because it contains only one main idea and narrows down the subject to a specific topic.

Practice Exercises

4. The subject of this essay is the economic implications of a global society.

This is a bad thesis because it simply announces the subject of the essay.

Practice Exercises

The problem of pollution in big cities.

This is not a complete sentence.

The problem of pollution in major cities can be alleviated by limiting the number of cars allowed to drive on city streets and creating more efficient public transportation systems.

Thesis Statement

Why should marijuana be legalized?

This is a question, not a statement.

Marijuana should be legalized because it is not any more addictive than tobacco and it can provide numerous medicinal benefits for those suffering from terminal illnesses.

Thesis Statement

Key Features

Subtopics

You can make your thesis statement more specific by including subtopics or supporting ideas. By doing this, you give your reader a clear idea of what will follow in the body paragraphs of your essay.

Key Features

Subtopics

The large influx of people to California has had major effects on the state.

No subtopics are named in this thesis statement.

subtopic #2

The large influx of people to California has had major effects on the ability of the state to provide housing, electricity and jobs for all residents.

subtopic #1

subtopic #3

This statement names three subtopics.
Try to identify them

Subtopics

Another Example

Inner-city public schools grapple with some serious problems.

No subtopics are named in this thesis statement.

subtopic #1

subtopic #2

Some of the most serious problems in today's inner-city public schools are the overcrowded classrooms, the low percentage of trained teachers, and the lack of resources such as textbooks for students.

subtopic #3

Where Should the Thesis Appear?

- ❑ The thesis statement should appear in the beginning of the essay, usually in the first paragraph.

Also, it is often restated in the last paragraph.

Changing your Thesis

- ❑ You can revise your thesis at any time while you are writing your essay.
 - ❑ Writing is an act of discovery. As you write, you may discover that you really want to write about or focus on something different.
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