

Name _____

Period _____

Types of Thesis Statements

As mentioned previously, there are many different types of essays, each with specific requirements and rules. The following exercise will help you learn how to write thesis statements for different types of essays. Let's take a look at how to write thesis statements for each type of essay. Once you know these simple rules, it will be even easier to decide how to write a thesis statement that will fit well with the type of essay you are writing.

Argumentative

In an Argumentative paper, you are trying to win the reader over to your side. Your thesis statement must state which side you are on in the argument being presented.

For Example:

Topic: Should smoking be made illegal?

Argumentative Thesis: Smoking is a highly dangerous habit that should be made illegal.

To test whether this thesis actually qualifies as a Argumentative thesis, we need to check two things:

1. Does the thesis reflect an opinion or position?
YES, It is an opinion that smoking is a "highly dangerous habit that should be made illegal." In other words, there would be people who totally disagree with this statement and believe that smoking should remain legal.
2. Does the thesis mention the topic of the essay?
YES, the topic –the legal issue of smoking—has been mentioned.

Cause/Effect

For a Cause/Effect paper, you are either explaining the causes or the effects of something, and in rare cases, both. Your thesis statement must state 1) whether you are looking at the causes or the effects, and 2) your position on the causes or the effects.

For Example:

Topic: Gun control in the United States

Cause/Effect Thesis: Lack of gun control has caused thousands of deaths in the United States alone.

Let's test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

1. Yes; it is an opinion that gun control is to blame for thousands of deaths in the United States. Some people would disagree, stating that the problem is not gun control, but irresponsible people who get their hands on guns who are the problem.
2. Yes, the topic of gun control in the United States specifically is mentioned.

Name _____

Period _____

Compare/Contrast

Remember that in a Compare/Contrast Essay, you are finding similarities OR differences OR BOTH between two or more things. For a Compare/Contrast thesis, you must state whether you are comparing OR contrasting OR both.

For Example:

Topic: Compare and contrast the differences and similarities between having a dog and a cat for a pet.

Compare/Contrast Thesis: Even though cats and dogs have different personalities, they both can make excellent companions.

Let's test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

1. Testing a thesis for this type of essay is a little more tricky. The opinion "they both can make excellent companions" is truly something that can be argued. People who love dogs and hate cats might disagree.
2. The topic of both cats and dogs is mentioned; by using the words "even though" and "both" together, the reader knows that the essay will be comparing and contrasting the two pets.

Descriptive (also Reflective or Narrative)

Remember that Descriptive essays describe something in detail. Your Descriptive thesis should introduce your reader to the details they will read about in your paper.

For Example:

Topic: Describe your favorite vacation spot.

Descriptive Thesis: The sights, sounds, and smells of the beach make this sandy destination my favorite vacation spot in the world.

Let's test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

1. Testing a thesis for this type of essay is tricky. The opinion or position for this type of essay comes mostly from the fact that it is YOUR OPINION that the sights, sounds, and smells make the beach a "favorite" vacation spot. In other words, someone else may feel that it is the surfing that makes the beach a favorite spot; another person may feel that the beach is boring, and prefer skiing in the mountains.
2. The topic of vacation spot is mentioned in the thesis.

Informative/Explanatory

In an Informative/Explanatory essay, you are explaining or teaching something to your audience. For Informative/Explanatory thesis statements, be sure to tell your audience what you are going to explain to them.

For Example:

Topic: How to make homemade ice cream.

Informative/Explanatory Thesis: Homemade ice cream is a delicious and refreshing treat that can be made in just a few simple steps.

Let's test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

Name _____

Period _____

1. The opinion that homemade ice cream is “delicious and refreshing” and can be made with just a few “simple” steps can be argued. Your reader may not know how easy it is, and will read the essay to see just how “simple” it is to make homemade ice cream.
2. It is important to remember that the topic is “how to” and that the thesis mentions that the reader will learn how to do something.

Response to Literature

In a Response to Literature Essay, you must show a connection between a text and the topic of the essay. A thesis for this type of essay must specifically state what you feel is most important about the topic in the specific text.

For Example:

*Topic: The importance of the setting in Steinbeck’s **Of Mice and Men**.*
*Response to Literature Thesis: The era of the Great Depression and the sparse California landscape each contribute to the loneliness felt by the characters in Steinbeck’s **Of Mice and Men**.*

Let’s test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

1. It is the writer’s opinion that both the era of the Great Depression and the sparse California landscape contribute to the loneliness of the characters. This is opinion and can be argued, since another student may feel that the character’s homelessness or their poverty is what affected the characters.
2. The setting—in the mention of the era of the Great Depression and the sparse California landscape—is addressed in this thesis.

Research

The thesis for a Research paper has its own challenges. For a research paper, you are presenting information you gathered, and usually, analyzing or making a judgment about this research. A thesis for this type of essay must specifically state the research subject and your position on the findings of your research. Therefore, you may start with one thesis statement, but after doing your research, you may alter your thesis statement to reflect your findings.

For Example:

Topic: Cell phone use and teen accidents
Response to Literature Thesis: It is clear that the increased use of cell phones and the accident rate among teen drivers has a direct correlation, and it is crucial that teens become more educated on the dangers of driving while distracted.

Let’s test this thesis. 1) Is it an opinion or position, and 2) Is the topic mentioned?

1. It is the writer’s opinion that there is a direct correlation or connection between the accident rate and cell phone use in teen drivers, and the research in the paper must support that.
2. Yes; cell phone use and teen accidents is clearly stated.

Name _____

Period _____

Writing “Better” Thesis Statements

Now that you are familiar with writing focus statements and are able to recognize different types of thesis statements, it is time to practice producing thesis statements.

Remember, to qualify as a thesis statement, the thesis should:

- state what you believe
- mention the topic of the essay
- clearly convey the point you want to make in your entire paper

For example:

Topic: body piercing/tattoos for teens

Thesis: *Teens should not be allowed to get tattoos or body piercings.*

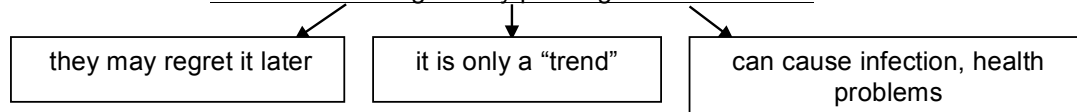
Let’s evaluate this thesis statement.

1. *Does it state an opinion or position?* Yes.
2. *Does it mention the topic of the essay?* Yes.
3. *Does it clearly convey the point of the entire paper?* Sort of. While the position is clear—that teens should not be allowed to get tattoos or body piercings—it is a bit dry and boring and does not entice the reader to keep reading on by giving them a “taste” of what the paper will be about.

To take your thesis statements to the next level, include a “taste” of what is to come in the essay by including support for your opinion.

Take a look at how to do this:

3 reasons: teens should not get body piercing/tattoos because:



Notice we have taken the basic thesis and included three very brief examples to support our opinion.

NOTE: These 3 reasons are your **thesis support**, and will eventually become **topic sentences**.

So, let’s take a look at our dry thesis statement again: *Teens should not be allowed to get tattoos or body piercings.*

And here’s our “Better” Thesis Statement: *Teens should not be allowed to get tattoos or body piercings since this drastic expression of “individuality” is a trend which will eventually go out of style, leaving teens with a permanent mark they may regret later—especially when their body art results in infection or other unforeseen health problems.*

Like it? As you can see, the opinion is given, but is taken beyond the dry, simple thesis to a *better* thesis statement: one that includes a taste of what is to come later in the essay. This sounds like a ton of work was put into the sentence, but it is simply an integration of the three reasons combined with the simple thesis statement.