Thesis Statements

What Is A Thesis Statement?

In terms of **function**, a thesis statement is a sentence that tells the reader how you have interpreted the topic you have written about. By revealing how you've interpreted the topic, you are also revealing the plan for the rest of the paper; therefore, the thesis functions as a **compass**, indicating where you want the reader to go.

In terms of **structure**, a thesis statement usually appears at the beginning of a paper and conventionally appears at the **end of the introduction**. The rest of your paper will explain your thesis by presenting and discussing the evidence you used to produce the thesis.

How Do I Write An Effective Thesis?

Since the thesis captures the scope and direction of the paper, since it accounts for the evidence you've used and the conclusions you've drawn about the evidence, a thesis can't be produced until significant thought has been devoted to its creation; therefore, it's advisable to write the thesis *after* producing a draft.

Since it's not practical to wait until the end to write a thesis, you should consider composing a "working" or preliminary thesis as you draft. It's imperative that you revise the working thesis throughout the writing process and perfect it at the *end*. A good thesis can't be produced until near the **end** of the writing process when you understand the point of your paper.

Because a thesis account for the paper's main insight, write it by asking yourself what the main point of the paper is. Then, in one sentence, write the man point of the paper. Consider using the following language to help formulate your thesis:

The main point of this paper is that _____. When you're ready to submit your paper, you can delete everything before the blank; or not. Plenty of writers bluntly tell readers "The main point of this book is…" or "The main point of this chapter is…" Check with your professors on their style preferences, but people who sell many more books than your professors do it just this way.

You know your thesis is effective if it has the following characteristics:

- Answers the assigned question.
- Has an insight about a topic.
- Captures the main idea of the paper, resonating with title, topic sentences, support, and conclusion.
- Satisfies Goldilocks: not too broad, and not too specific.
- Appears at the end of the introduction.

What Are Some Types of Thesis Statements?

1. The Evaluative Thesis.

    - This type of thesis passes judgement.

    Example: High school start times in the United States are not as efficacious as those in Japan.

2. The Problem-Based and Effect-Based Thesis.

    - A problem-based thesis focuses on a problem related to some issue or idea or the effects of the problem.

    Examples:

    A. Early high school start times lead to increased rates of teenage car accidents and higher incidences of emotional problems among teens.

    B. If high schools don't shift to a later start time, students' health and grades will suffer.

3. The Solution-Based Thesis.

    - A solution-based thesis describes what can be done to address a problem.

    Example: By starting high school at 8:30, school districts will reduce the incidence of teen suicide and increase graduation rates.

These are just 3 of the many ways to approach thesis writing. Whatever method you choose, make sure you know what you're doing, why, and that your method accurately captures the goal of your paper.

Exercise on Effective Thesis Statements

Directions: Identify the most effective thesis statement in each question.

1A. George Washington was one of the greatest leaders in world history.

1B. George Washington's military experiences prepared him for the leadership demands of the presidency.

1C. Unlike most other presidents, George Washington was a general.

2A. Television has a variety of bad effects on viewers.

2B. Violence on television is ruining the soul of our country.

2C. Watching too much television can lead to obesity, mental health problems, and violent behavior.

3A. Children who don't receive enough attention from their parents are more likely to have low self-esteem, commit crimes, and become poor.

3B. Parents need to spend more time with their children.

3C. When parents neglect their children, the children suffer a variety of negative consequences.

4A. Nineteenth-century American writers believed in freedom.

4B. In the early nineteenth century, American writers began to write about ideas that were universal.

4C. In the nineteenth century, American writers shifted from imitating European writers to creating a uniquely American type of writing.

5A. The Parthenon is an influential work of architecture.

5B. In order to understand the influence and functions of Classical architecture, one should study the Parthenon.

5C. The Parthenon architects were Ictinus and Callicrate, two of the more creative men in history.