Writing an Effective Thesis Statement
9th & 10th Grade Strategy
Created by Ms. Rappoccio

What Is a Thesis Statement?

- A “mini argument”
- A sentence or two that briefly describes the main idea of your paper and the main argument that you are trying to make
- Offers your readers a quick preview of what your paper is going to be about
- Makes an argumentative assertion
- Focuses your paper on a very specific, debatable point
- Gives your audience guidance about the conclusions you draw in the paper
- In some kinds of writing, such as narratives or descriptions, a thesis statement is less important, but you may still want to provide some kind of statement that helps to guide your reader through your paper

How Should I Write a Thesis Statement?

- Claim + Reason = Thesis Statement

This is an easy formula to remember to help you ensure that you have included both elements of the thesis statement. The claim is the assertion or main idea that you are making. Then, you will want to make sure you that you include the reason or support for that claim. A nice word to substitute for the + part of the equation is “because.” You don’t have to use this exact word or this style every time, but it often works quite well.

Thesis = Claim (answer to question being asked) + (BECAUSE) reason 1 and reason 2.

Example: You might be writing a paper on sexist language in textbooks and state this thesis: “Sexist language in college textbooks is harmful.” This is a good start and makes clear the claim part of your thesis. However, to make it more powerful and specific, try adding in the “because clause” and reason: “Sexist language in college textbooks is harmful because it reinforces negative stereotypes about many groups and individuals.” The section of the sentence after “because” makes clear the reason to support your claim, so you now have claim + reason = thesis statement.

What Should a Thesis Statement Accomplish?

For the writer, the thesis statement:
- Serves as a planning tool.
- Helps the writer determine the paper’s real focus and clarify the relationship between idea.
- Becomes a hook on which the writer can “hang” the sub-theses or the topic sentences that present evidence in support of the argument.
- Anticipates questions about the topic and provides the unifying thread between pieces of information.

For the reader, the thesis statement:
- Serves as a “map” to follow through the paper.
- Prepares the reader to read.
- Keeps the reader focused on the argument
- Helps the reader spot the main ideas.
- Engages the reader in the argument.
- Offers enough detail for your reader to grasp your argument.