

Tallahassee Community College

Learning Commons

Spring 2021

*How to Construct a Thesis
for your Essay:*

Step By Step Instructions

Choose a Topic that Interests You

- This must be the first step in writing your paper and your thesis statement because all direction of the paper will depend on what topic you are writing about.
- Unfortunately, you must ignore this step if the topic is decided for you.



Try this **S**trange **W**ay to get ideas



Explore and Research your Topic!

- The goal of this step is to find a particular narrow subject in your topic which you can make an argument about.
- For example, take the topic of computers. There are many aspects of computers that can be expanded on such as hardware, software, and programming.
- However, vague topics like these do not make good theses.
- But something more narrow, such as the effects of Steve Jobs on the modern computer industry, allows for a much clearer focus.

STEP 1

ASK A QUESTION: Should schools require students to wear uniforms on a daily basis?

STEP 2

CREATE A DECLARATION: Schools should require students to wear uniforms on a daily basis.

STEP 3

LIST 3 REASONS WHY:

- Students experience less peer pressure
- Uniforms cost less overall
- Promote reduction of violence in school

STEP 4

COMBINE AND WRITE YOUR THESIS STATEMENT:

Schools should require students to wear uniforms on a daily basis due to the fact that students will experience less peer pressure, parents will spend less money on clothing, and schools will see a reduction in violence among students.

Start with a question and then make the answer your thesis

Start with a Question -- Then Make the Answer to Your Question the Thesis. Some Examples



Question: What are the benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade classroom?

Thesis: Computers allow fourth graders an early advantage in technological and scientific education.

Question: Why is the Mississippi River so important in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*?

Thesis: The river comes to symbolize both division and progress, as it separates our characters and country while still providing the best chance for Huck and Jim to get to know one another.

Question: Why do people seem to get angry at vegans, feminists, and other "morally righteous" subgroups?

Thesis: Through careful sociological study, it has been found that people naturally assume that "morally righteous" people look down on others, and label them as "inferior," causing anger and conflict where there generally is none.

Address a Single Issue in great Detail

Examples

Thesis = **Topic** + **Opinion** + **Why/How**

- As the rate of **teen suicide** grows, **more preventative measures should be taken in order to save lives** *by identifying and seeking professional treatment.*
- In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee shows that **justice will never prevail** *if prejudice continues to infect people.*
- **The struggles of these protagonists** in novels by J.D. Salinger, John Knowles, and Elie Wiesel **illustrate that acceptance of the uncontrollable is necessary** and that **meaning comes not from things of the world but rather from within.**

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Example 1:

- In the novel, "G-Dog and the Homeboys", Spanky's personality and emotions are revealed by his words and actions.
- **The subject is Spanky. My opinion is that his personality and emotions are revealed by his words and actions.**

Example 2:

- In the novel "G-Dog and the Homeboys", Spanky's childhood relationship with his mother informs his personality and emotions as a young man.
- **The subject is Spanky's relationship with his mother. My opinion is that this relationship tells us about his personality and emotions.**

Tailor your Thesis to the Type of Paper you're Writing: Analytical Essay

Examples of literary analysis thesis statements

- In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare uses foreshadowing to suggest that danger or a perilous situation is near.
- In the poem, "Jabberwacky" by Lewis Carroll, the author uses scary-sounding nonsense words to create an ominous yet humorous tone.
- In *Number the Stars*, Ellen's Star of David necklace symbolizes Annemarie's devotion to her friend and her stance against the Germans.

Analytical: Breaks down something to better examine and understand it. An analytical thesis statement should answer a "how" or "why" question, and provide evidence to support that claim.

Sample Thesis:

This dynamic between different generations sparks much of the play's tension, as age becomes a motive for the violence and unrest that rocks King Lear.

Tailor your Thesis to the Type of Paper you're Writing: Expository

More than one focus

- ▶ Sometimes a research question has more than one focus.
- ▶ For example: What are the causes and effects of insomnia?

Expository: Teaches or illuminates a point. An expository statement is aimed at explaining something to the audience. You don't have to prove or analyze the subject matter – only deliver the information.

Sample Thesis:

The explosion of 1800's philosophies like Positivism, Marxism, and Darwinism undermined and refuted Christianity to instead focus on the real, tangible world.

Tailor your Thesis to the Type of Paper you're Writing: Argumentative

Writing Argument Essays THESIS STATEMENT

Your thesis statement in an argumentative essay must be strong and to the point. Often persuasive thesis statements include the words "**should**," "**ought**," and "**must**."

Examples:

- The death penalty **should** be abolished.
- Cigarette smoking **should** be banned.
- Teens who are caught texting while driving **ought** to have their licenses revoked.
- Tuition rates **must** decrease.



Argumentative: Makes a claim about which reasonable people can disagree. It takes a position, and asserts the writer's stance which is logical and possible. The argumentative thesis must be focused and narrow, and be supported by evidence.

Sample Thesis:

Without the steady hand and specific decisions of Barack Obama, America would never have recovered from the hole it entered in the early 2000's.

Know the type, purpose, and audience of the paper.



- These are usually assigned by the instructor, but even if you get to choose them, you must understand that these will affect your thesis statement considerably.
- If you are writing a persuasive paper, your purpose will be to *prove* something to a specific group.
- If you are writing a descriptive paper, your purpose will be to *describe* something to a specific group.
- Each of these must be expressed in your thesis somehow.
- Do not assume that your teacher is your audience. A good rule is to write for an imagined audience, your peers, who would otherwise not have background information about your topic.
- If in doubt, always ask your instructor/teacher for clarification.

Ensure your Thesis is provable, free of bias language, precise, and to the point.



City council members are ineffective and should be thrown in jail is not an argumentative thesis. City council members' ineffectiveness is not a reason to send them to jail.



City council members should be term limited to prevent one group or party from maintaining control indefinitely is an arguable thesis because term limits are possible, and shared political control is a reasonable goal.



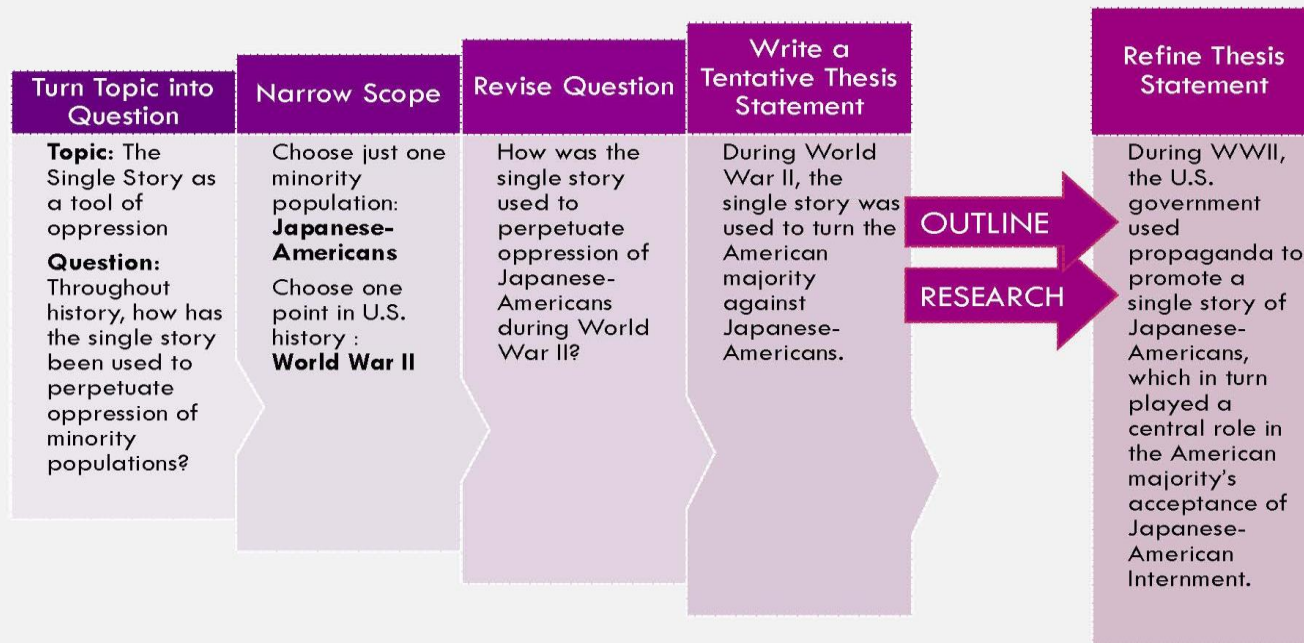
Individuals convicted of murder will go to hell when they die is not an argumentative thesis because its support rests on religious beliefs or values rather than evidence.



Rehabilitation programs for individuals serving life sentences should be funded because these programs reduce violence within prisons is an argumentative thesis because evidence such as case studies and statistics can be used to support it.

Your Thesis Statement: The Process and Revision

Developing a Thesis Statement



- Is an assertion that starts with a question and needs several revisions.
- It takes a stand – which includes your educated opinion and research on the topic.
- It answers a specific question in detail and is precise.
- Is debatable among peers. Meaning, a person researching the same content/field may come to a different conclusion.

**Get the tone right
and use verbs that
convey the correct
meaning**

You want your thesis statement to be identifiable as a thesis statement. You do this by using verbs that are firm, precise, and definite. Consider using a synonym finder or thesaurus in order to avoid repetition.

Examples of Tone

- Cautious
- Humorous
- Affectionate
- Hostile
- Critical
- Objective
- Personal
- Violent
- Solemn / Serious
- Sarcastic
- Disapproving
- Enthusiastic
- Desperate
- Pleading
- Indifferent

Thesis Statement Verbs

Accentuates	Contributes	Dramatizes	Exemplifies	Illuminates
Broadens	Depicts	Evinces	Heightens	Intends
Contrasts	Documents	Guides	Informs	Predicts
Distinguishes	Establishes	Infers	Portrays	Reveals
Epitomizes	Foreshadows	Opposes	Renders	Unmasks
Expresses	Includes	Reinforces	Uncovers	Bestows
Implies	Necessitates	Suggests	Attributes	Connotes
Manifests	Reflects	Attempts	Confirms	Demonstrates
Provides	Specifies	Concludes	Defends	Entertains
Signifies	Analyzes	Creates	Discloses	Exposes
Affirms	Compares	Directs	Enlightens	Illustrates
Clarifies	Conveys	Elucidates	Exhibits	Juxtaposes
			Signals	Verifies

Know where to place a thesis statement in your essay

Thesis Statement Example

Psychologists have argued for decades about how a person's character is formed. Numerous psychologists believe that one's birth order (i.e. place in the family as the youngest, oldest, or middle child) has the greatest influence. **Birth order can have a significant impact in the formation of a child's character.** Birth order can strongly affect one's relationship with parents, relationships with others, and how one views responsibility as an adult.

The **thesis statement** makes a strong claim about birth order.

Subpoints in the thesis or nearby help the reader know how the essay will be organized

Because of the role thesis statements play, they appear at the beginning of the paper, usually at the end of the first paragraph or somewhere in the introduction.

Although most people look for the thesis at the end of the first paragraph, its location can depend on a number of factors:

such as how lengthy of an introduction you need before you can introduce your thesis or the length of your paper.

Please contact your instructor for guidelines.

Limit a thesis statement to one or two sentences in length

- Thesis statements are clear and to-the-point, which helps the reader identify the topic and direction of the paper, as well as your position towards the subject.



Introduction and Thesis

Start with general topic statement

During the 19th and 20th centuries, nationalism has played a major role in the history of the world. Nationalism is the pride, love, and devotion a person feels for their nation. It usually develops in a group of people who share a common history, culture, geographic location and, most of all, a common cause or belief. At the Congress of Vienna, the Italians and Germans were two groups of people who were split apart politically in order to maintain a delicate balance of power in Europe. However, two great leaders, Garibaldi in Italy and Bismarck in Germany, used nationalism and military force to inspire their people and create unified nation-states. Despite these similarities, Garibaldi displays nationalism when he voluntarily gives up power to ensure his nation's unity, while Bismarck abuses nationalism to gain power when he is selected to be Chancellor of a united Germany.

Narrow focus to specific group or region.

Thesis Statement

Includes Two Examples and the Theme (Nationalism)

Thesis Self Test:

"Did I answer the question?"

"Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?"

Another Thesis example and Thesis Self Test: Compare and contrast essay

Summary of how to construct a Thesis Statement

A SUCCESSFUL THESIS STATEMENT:



- is usually one sentence
- is a statement, not a question
- identifies the subject of the paper
- takes a stand rather than simply announcing a subject

- Choose a topic that interests you.
- Explore and research your topic and focus on a specific detail. Address a single issue in great detail.
- Start with a question and make the answer your thesis statement.
- Your thesis statement should be debatable, clear to the point, and identify the topic.
- Tailor your thesis to the type of paper you are writing (analytical, expository, argumentative).
- Know the type, purpose, and audience of your paper.
- Limit thesis to one to two sentences, unless stated otherwise.
- Place thesis at the end of the first paragraph, unless your instructor suggested otherwise.



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Sources Used:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Thesis-Statement>

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/argumentative-thesis-statements>