Recognizing Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is one of the most important sentences in an essay. A thesis statement is a statement of opinion or position on the topic of the essay. To qualify as a thesis statement, it must:

• 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.

Notice that the underlined part in the sentence above is an opinion. In other words, people can disagree or agree with this statement. Some synonyms for the word thesis are hypothesis, belief, theory, argument, and idea.

Here are some general rules to remember when writing a Thesis Statement:

• Be sure that the thesis is an opinion or your position, and doesn’t just state the topic of the paper.

  • For example: “Some schools require students to wear uniforms.” This proposed thesis does not include an opinion.

    Revision: Schools should not require students to wear uniforms.

• Be sure that your thesis does not just state a general fact—remember, that is what the Focus Statement is for.

  • For example: “Many students stress about homework and grades.” This proposed thesis makes a broad statement that doesn’t give enough specifics, and it does not express your opinion.

    Revision: Grades and homework should be eliminated from schools.

• Be sure that your thesis is not too broad.

  • For example: “Music has had a huge impact on fashion in the United States.” Instead of trying to cover all music and all fashion, instead, focus on a smaller idea.

    Revision: Music of the 1940s reflected the patriotism felt by Americans during World War II.
In order to write a decent thesis statement, it is important that you can recognize the basic, yet essential parts of a good thesis statement. Once you are able to see what makes an appropriate—or even a poor—thesis statement, you will be able to automatically recognize those parts in your own writing.

Directions: Read each thesis statement. Complete the tasks for each statement, identifying the aspects of a good or problematic thesis statement. An example has been done for you.

Topic: Should school cafeterias remove all "unhealthy" foods and replace them with only "healthier" options?

EX. Proposed Thesis: *Because of growing concerns about obesity and health problems in teens, school lunchrooms should replace fatty and sugary foods with healthier options such as fruits and vegetables.*

- a. Is it an opinion or position? Yes If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.
- b. What might the other side argue? The other side might argue that students should have the choice to eat whatever they want, and that students themselves—rather than schools—should be responsible for the choices they make.
- c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.
- d. For what type of essay is the statement written? Argumentative or Persuasive
- e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? *because, growing concerns, should replace, healthier options*
- f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? YES

1. Topic: Shakespeare’s use of figurative language in *Romeo and Juliet*.

   Proposed Thesis: *In Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare effectively used figurative language such as similes and metaphors to highlight characters’ emotions, show the intensity of Romeo and Juliet’s love, and to enhance the imagery used throughout the play.*

   - a. Is it an opinion or position? ____________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.
   - b. What might the other side argue? ___________________________________________________________________
   - c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.
   - d. For what type of essay is the statement written? __________________________
   - e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ___
   - f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ______________________
2. Topic: offering free college to all who want to attend
   
   Proposed Thesis: College should be free to anyone who has the drive, is willing to keep their grades up, and agrees to complete their course of study within a given amount of time.
   
   a. Is it an opinion or position? ________________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.
   b. What might the other side argue? __________________________
   c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.
   d. For what type of essay is the statement written? __________________________
   e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ________________
   f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ________________

3. Topic: Explain how the media affects teens’ body image.
   
   Proposed Thesis: Television, movies, and magazine images affect how teenagers perceive themselves.
   
   a. Is it an opinion or position? ________________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.
   b. What might the other side argue? __________________________
   c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.
   d. For what type of essay is the statement written? __________________________
   e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ________________
   f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ________________

4. Topic: Describe your favorite place.
   
   Proposed Thesis: My family’s mountain cabin is located in Big Bear, California.
   
   a. Is it an opinion or position? ________________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.
   b. What might the other side argue? __________________________
c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.

d. For what type of essay is the statement written? ______________________

e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ________________

f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ______________________

5. Topic: Which is better: sleeping in late or staying up late?
   Proposed Thesis: Some people prefer to sleep in late, while others like to stay up late to get the most out of their day.

   a. Is it an opinion or position? ______________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.

   b. What might the other side argue? ______________________

   c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.

   d. For what type of essay is the statement written? ______________________

   e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ________________

   f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ______________________

6. Topic: causes of obesity in children
   Proposed Thesis: Obesity in children is caused by a variety of factors: the massive intake of fatty and sugary foods, too few fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods, and overall lack of exercise.

   a. Is it an opinion or position? ______________ If YES, underline the key words that indicate an opinion or position.

   b. What might the other side argue? ______________________

   c. Highlight or circle the words that indicate or mention the topic.

   d. For what type of essay is the statement written? ______________________

   e. Which key words give you clues as to the type of essay this statement is for? ________________

   f. Is this a Thesis Statement, based upon your findings? ______________________