

# Thesis Statements

The thesis is one of the most important elements of your essay. It often appears near the end of the introductory paragraph of your essay and is usually about one or two sentences in length.

## Main Topic

A thesis statement should give the reader insight into the topic of your essay, as well as summarize your argument and provide a framework for the structure of your paper. It should also include your opinion(s) and/or assertions on the topic. **In simplified terms, it is a sentence or two that states what your paper will be about.**

It is good to narrow down your topic because you won't be able to cover everything about it in the standard 4-5 page essay. Regardless of the length of your paper, this specificity can allow your thesis to be a guide for you as you write your body paragraphs, and it helps clarify your topic for your audience. For this reason, it is important to avoid a broad or vague thesis that confuses the reader. Instead, it should be simple and focused, while still including enough detail that your reader is not left unsure of what your essay will be about.

## Debatable and Opinion-Based

The thesis must be something that is debatable and opinion-based. While you might not address the other side to your argument, there should be another opinion(s) about what you're writing. This means that it cannot be a fact. If it's a fact, you won't have much to write about.

For example, if your thesis was "bananas are a fruit," you would not have to write much to convince people of this. The majority of people would agree that bananas are indeed fruits. You could argue, though, that "bananas are the best fruit." This is a debatable topic because some might argue that strawberries or apples are the best fruit.

Your thesis cannot be a question although it can answer a question. For example, your thesis could not be "What is the best fruit?" but your thesis could answer that question: "Bananas are the best fruit."

## Guide Though Essay

As stated above, your thesis can act as a guide through your essay. This will help you structure your body paragraphs as they will need to directly support your thesis; your thesis is your main argument, and your body paragraphs provide the reasoning which supports that argument.

Going back to our banana example, if your thesis is “bananas are the best fruit,” your body paragraphs could each be about the different reasons why bananas are the best fruit. Additionally, you could put these reasons in your thesis itself. You might think bananas are the best fruit because they are the most comedic fruit (bananas are used in so many jokes, such as the infamous banana peel slip), they can be used in a variety of recipes, and they can provide health benefits. Your body paragraphs could discuss these reasons. You could also add them to your thesis: “Bananas are the best fruit because they are the most comedic fruit, they can be used in a variety of recipes, and they can provide health benefits.”

## Questions to Come Up with a Claim/Thesis

If you are struggling to come up with a thesis, consider answering the following questions:

- How do you feel about the topic?
- What connections/information/experiences do you already have with the topic?
- What are the results of this? The consequences? The unintended consequences?
- What are the causes of this?
- Where do you see this in real life/the book/your sources?

## Things to Avoid

Please consult a tutor if you have questions or concerns as each essay is different. However, below are some common issues with thesis statements to be aware of:

- Avoid starting your thesis statement with “My paper/essay will be about...” Rather, simply state what your argument and point are.
- Avoid sentence fragments--make sure your thesis is both a complete thought and a complete sentence.
- Avoid extremely complicated or wordy thesis statements. Don't try to squeeze too many ideas into one sentence either. You want to make sure that your thesis statement is clear and strong.
- As discussed, avoid phrasing your thesis as a question. You can, however, lead in with one or even begin your introduction with one or more questions as a hook.
- Beware of run-on sentences! Your thesis can be more than one sentence, so if you need to split it up, that's okay.
- Avoid making a statement that does not reflect the contents of your paper. Make sure the ideas and opinions expressed align with what's in your essay.
- Avoid getting stuck with only three body paragraphs or three supporting arguments. You might find that you have much to say about only two reasons or perhaps you have four or five reasons to support your thesis. There's no need to limit yourself to only three supporting arguments!