



COM 5: Thesis Statements

The **thesis statement** is perhaps the most crucial part of your essay because it presents the main idea or main argument of the piece of writing. In academic essays, your thesis statement is often located in the introductory paragraph; however, this is not always the case. Consider the rhetorical situation and assignment guidelines to determine where to best place your thesis.

What does a thesis statement do?

- Informs the reader how to interpret the paper's significance
- Serves as a sign post for the essay, showing where the rest of the paper is headed
- Offers a unique perspective on the topic at hand
- Makes a claim or argument about a topic or issue

Creating a Thesis Statement

Once you have brainstormed about a topic, collected evidence to support your claims, and thought about the significance of your ideas, you should decide what you are arguing about the topic at hand. After this consideration, you'll likely find yourself with a working thesis statement that expresses your main idea. You may have to write your thesis multiple times before you feel it captures all you want to say about your argument.

Remember, your thesis statement is different from the topic itself. For example, the **topic** of your paper might be "Running" or even "Why People Should Run." Your **thesis statement**, however, will present an argument about running and explain the significance.

There are two types of thesis statements, blueprint and umbrella.

- A **blueprint thesis** lists what will be discussed in your paper (EX: Running is important because A, B, and C.). While blueprint thesis statements are sometimes appropriate, you may find them limiting, especially for longer papers.
- An **umbrella thesis** presents an overview of your argument without listing all of the individual components. An umbrella thesis allows you to express your argument in a condensed, concise way (EX: People who are interested in starting an exercise program should consider running because of the instant health benefits, both physical and mental.) While we know this paper will argue that running provides physical and mental health benefits, the writer does not have to list each one that will be discussed in the essay.

After you craft your thesis statement, ask yourself some questions about what your thesis statement accomplishes. This will help strengthen and clarify your main idea:

- Do I answer the question asked of me by this assignment?
- If this essay is argumentative, have I taken a clear position?
- Is my thesis statement specific enough?
- Does my thesis pass the "so what?" test? How is this idea related to a larger significance?

Remember, as you continue to develop your paper, your thesis statement may evolve. While your original thesis can serve as a guide, you should feel free to change your thesis based on the research you conduct or the ideas you further develop.

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