

## Academic Writing Guide: How to Write a Thesis Statement

### What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is a sentence, usually placed at the end of your introduction, that describes the focus of your essay. A thesis statement is essential for an academic essay. In the writing process, it is the main idea for your essay that helps to keep you focused and on topic. For your readers, it serves as a "roadmap" for where you are going to take them with your essay.

### Beginning: Identify Your Essay Type

Goal	Argumentative	Cause & Effect/Compare & Contrast	Analytical
Essay Goal	<b>Makes a claim and argues for one side of a topic/issue.</b>	Explain the <b>cause and effect</b> of something <b>OR</b> the <b>similarities and differences</b> between multiple things.	<b>Assess, evaluate, or analyse</b> something.
Thesis Goal	State <b>your central claim/argument</b> about your topic and main supporting points.	Identify the <b>main causes/effects</b> of your chosen topic. <b>OR</b> Describe the main <b>differences/similarities</b> you will be discussing.	Express the <b>conclusions</b> of your analysis.

### Examples of Thesis Statements

#### Argumentative Thesis

Utilitarianism ultimately fails as a moral theory because the calculation of consequences can be cumbersome, there is no guarantee of justice, and the "greater good argument" may be used to justify some behaviour that humans intuitively would condemn as evil.

#### Cause & Effect Thesis

The main factor that leads college age teens to attempt suicide is depression, which is often caused by extreme stress about academic performance, alcohol abuse, or drug addiction.

## **Compare & Contrast Thesis**

While both countries are multi-cultural in nature and have very large immigrant populations, the chief difference between the Canadian and the American approach to their immigrant populations is Canada's adoption of the "cultural mosaic" as opposed to the American "melting pot."

## **Analytical Essay Thesis**

While there have been many claims that vaccines can cause autism, an analysis of the scientific data shows that vaccines do not actually play a role in children developing autism spectrum disorder.

## **Steps to Writing a Strong Thesis**

### **1. Decide what question your essay will answer.**

- Read your material/notes closely, identify questions or ideas you may want to write about.
  - **Examples:**
    - How does the author use foreshadowing in this novel?
    - What purpose does mitosis serve in the lifespan of a cell?
    - What does this director's portrayal of teen life tell us about human nature?
    - How does this scene reflect the themes within the film?
  - For academic assignments, it is recommended that the questions you respond to in your assignment do not have a "yes" or "no" answer. Instead, they will have more complex answers, such as the ones prompted by the questions above. Answering a "yes" or "no" question will most likely result in a paper that is not very strong.

### **2. Answer your question in point form.**

- Brainstorm and write down some general points that express your ideas about possible answers.
  - Select your best answers based on your research or knowledge of the topic.
    - "Best answers" will be ones that can help you to fully answer the question that you will address and/or will be the most convincing to read for your assignment's audience.

### **3. Combine Steps One and Two**

- Turn the question and your best answer into a combination sentence that tells the reader what your paper is about.

- **Note:** Depending on the complexity of the topic, a thesis may be a single-point statement, or it may have three or more points supporting it (see examples above).

## Successful Thesis Criteria

### A good thesis should be...

1. **Direct**
  - a. It should tell the reader exactly what your paper is about.
2. **Limited in scope**
  - a. You should be able to make your case within the limits of your paper.
3. **Arguable**
  - a. People should have the chance to agree or disagree with your position.
4. **Supportable**
  - a. There should be evidence to support your position.

### Thesis statements should not...

1. Be simply an observation
  - a. **Example:** "Academic integrity has an impact on students' lives."
2. Be the title
  - a. **Example:** "The Impact of Academic Integrity on Students' Lives."
3. Ask a question
  - a. **Example:** "Does academic integrity have an impact on students' lives?"
4. Be completely neutral (considering every opinion/argument)
  - a. **Example:** "Academic integrity may or may not have an impact on student's lives, depending on how much they adhere to its values."

**For additional help, please make an appointment with a Writing & Learning Centre Humanities specialist at: <https://alexander.mywconline.com/>**