



Thesis Statements: Overview

A thesis statement is a sentence (or two) that presents the main argument of a paper; the thesis

Starting points to thesis development :

When unsure where to start, thesis templates can help you develop a working thesis:

- y Formula statements
 - o The key to formula statements is to state the relationship between the topic, situation/reasoning, and position. As you progress, you should return to the formula and adapt it to mirror your progress.
(Topic) + (position) = (reasoning for position)
(Specific Topic) + (active verb) + (conditions/context) = position
- y Research questions
 - o You can also use a series of questions to help refine your topic and argument, particularly when you are unsure of your conclusions
 - o *Craft of Research* (2008)² suggests the following process for developing goals:
Topic: I am studying ...
Question: because I want to find out what/ why/ how...
Significance: in order to help my reader understand ...

Formulating a Thesis Statement

The process of formulating a thesis can facilitate the writing process and help structure the paper. Writers who develop a tentative thesis early in the research process are more likely to address their research material critically. Writers who begin their papers with a clear thesis are less likely to produce papers that are poorly structured or off topic. Here are a few examples of weak, better, and the best thesis statements:

Weak: Some movies made for theatres are censored before being shown on television.
This states a fact, not a contestable argument .

Weak: This essay will examine the arguments for and against censoring movies on television.
This is a statement of the topic; it does not reflect a point of view .

Weak: The censoring of movies shown on television is a controversial topic.
Again, this statement presents a fact with no clear position .

Weak: Should movies be censored when shown on television?
This is a question, and does not reveal the writer's position .

Weak: I am opposed to the censoring of movies shown on television.
Better, but the emphasis on 'I' reduces the impact of the thesis .

Better : Movies made for theatres should not be censored before being shown on television.
This thesis presents a definite viewpoint, but no reasoning is given .

Best: Current television regulations violate the producers' right to freedom of artistic expression and the viewer's right to freedom of choice because they do not acknowledge how context changes how one understands content and word choice
This thesis presents a definite position or argument and highlights the reasons supporting the argument. Note how this version of the thesis also helps the readers anticipate the structure of the paper to follow.

¹ Based on: Rosenwasser, D., & Stephen, J. (2000). *Writing analytically*. Philadelphia, PA: Harcourt College Publishers.

² Booth, W., Colomb, G., Williams, J. (2008). *The craft of research*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Common Mistakes

The bad: Thesis statements that don't argue anything

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