



Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is a one to two sentence claim near the beginning of your paper. This powerful little sentence has the power to structure your paper, assist your reader, and challenge the opposition. It is the reason for the paper and the primary way that you make your voice heard.

How do I start on a thesis statement?

While it may seem small, a thesis statement takes careful preparation and detailed research:

- After you have decided on a topic and done your research, you still have to **contemplate the problems, solutions, and/or causes** surrounding your topic.
- Then, ask yourself **what you believe is the best course of action**, according to your research and beliefs.
- Next, **be confident!** Remember, the thesis statement (and the whole paper) is *your* voice, so do not be afraid to make a claim. If you do not make a claim, you cannot see if it works or not.
- **Do not be afraid of revision.** A thesis statement usually changes a few times before the author is completely happy with it. You have to be sure that it matches your argument, what you want to say, and what your research shows.

Thesis Statement Goals

A thesis statement should always seek to meet certain goals to be successful. No thesis statement will **BE** exactly the same, but they will always seek to **DO** the same things.

Goals:

- **Clearly written**
 - A thesis statement should be written clearly and confidently. If too complex, the claim could be too challenging or misinterpreted and lost.
- **Arguable and debatable**
 - A thesis statement cannot be a worthy claim if it is just a fact. The ability for someone to disagree with you can make the conversation valuable.
- **Concise**
 - A thesis statement should only be 1-2 sentences. If it is too long, then you may overwhelm yourself or your reader.
- **Argue how and/or why**
 - To avoid making a thesis too general or vague, ask yourself how and/or why you are making the claim. What are the specifics?
 - “Generality is the enemy of art.” – Konstantin Stanislavski
- **Create a roadmap and structure**
 - Without focus, the paper will be weak and aimless.
 - The paper should reflect the thesis. This means that if you mention a few different topics in your thesis, then they should appear in the same order in the paper.
 - Only include relevant points and information.
- **Inform the reader**
 - Give the readers expectations so the paper makes more sense.
 - The thesis can tell the reader exactly what you believe or, at least, what you want to prove or disprove.
 - Do not mislead the reader by intentionally misinterpreting the research.

“So what?” Test

The “So what?” test tells you if your thesis is strong enough. If you read your thesis and think “so what?”, then keep working on it until it has a specific point to make.

To pass the “So what?” test, go step by step through the drafting process:

- First, name a topic.
 - For this exercise, let us use **“climate change in the Arctic.”**

- Then, ask a question
 - **“How is climate change in the Arctic bad?”**

- Then, do your research and find a gap/research interest.
 - *Climate change in the Arctic is causing ice to melt. Animals are losing their habitats. Not many have written about walrus habitat loss.*

- Then, convert the previous question into a statement
 - **“Climate change in the Arctic is bad.”**

- Then, revise the statement to be more specific to your research.
 - **“Climate change in the Arctic is dangerous for wildlife.”**

- Then, do more research and revise it to be even more specific.
 - *Pacific walruses rely on sea ice to hunt, rest, and feed their young. Without it, they cannot survive.*
 - **“Climate change in the Arctic endangers Pacific walruses because it melts floating sea ice, which is used for hunting, resting, and nursing.”**

- Then, to be more specific, try to recognize any opposition, obstacles, or exceptions.
 - **“Despite green initiatives to protect the Arctic, climate change continues to endanger Pacific walrus populations by melting floating sea ice, essential havens for hunting, resting, and nursing.”**

- Finally, revise it as many times as needed. Reasons for changing it include new research or personal preference.
 - **“Despite green initiatives to protect the Arctic, ocean acidification from climate change continues to reduce algae, mollusk, and snail populations, which endangers Pacific walruses with starvation.”**
 - Avoid being too general or too vague. Be confident and opinionated but only if you back it up with research.