

The Writing Center

DLA: Thesis Statements



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

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Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE DLA** per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding Thesis Statements

The thesis statement of an essay is the one- or two- sentence statement(s) that expresses the main idea of the paper.

The thesis statement:

- identifies the writer's topic and the opinion the writer has about that topic.
- should appear early in the essay usually as the last sentence in the introduction.

For example, an essay could have this thesis: *The current television rating system does little to help parents make wise programming choices for their children.*

This thesis statement presents both the essay's topic and the writer's opinion:

Topic: the current television rating system

Writer's opinion: It does little to help parents decide what children should watch.

Why is a thesis statement necessary?

The thesis statement performs two functions:

1. Focuses the essay's subject

Once the writer decides on the paper's main focus, the thesis statement additionally serves as a guide to focus and organize the essay.

2. Aids reader understanding

A hallmark of a well-organized essay is a thesis-support structure. In other words, the thesis statement informs the reader on what will follow in the rest of the essay. When the body paragraphs fulfill this reader expectation, the paper feels well organized, and the content makes sense.

If the thesis statement is misleading, however, or missing altogether, the body of the paper can seem confusing or irrelevant because it is not viewed in relation to the paper's overall topic (the thesis). Thus, the thesis statement is important because it answers the reader's question, "Why is this essential to the main idea? How does it support the

thesis?"

Strategy

Because the thesis statement is so important, the writer must shape it carefully, and that means approaching the first draft with a preliminary thesis statement in mind.

The preliminary thesis statement states:

- the essay's topic
- the writer's opinion of the topic in an early, rough form.

The benefit of starting with a preliminary thesis is that a writer can edit, rearrange, delete, or revise their thesis until it fulfills their essay's focus and purpose. The preliminary thesis may bear little or no resemblance to the thesis statement in the final version of the essay, which is perfectly normal! If it takes a couple or multiple drafts to reach your ideal thesis, then continue to play with your thesis as much as needed before the final draft.

When shaping a preliminary thesis, consider the following qualities of an effective thesis statement:

1. **A good thesis statement clearly suggests an essay's direction, emphasis, and scope.** A thesis statement should not make promises that the essay will not fulfill. It should suggest how ideas are related and where the emphasis will lie.
2. **A good thesis statement is neither too broad nor too narrow.** The thesis determines the scope of an essay. If a thesis is too broad, the essay will be superficial. On the other hand, if a thesis is too narrow, the essay will have nowhere to go. Of course, making the thesis statement just right depends on the specifics of the assignment being addressed, but here's a rough example of how narrow a thesis statement should be.

Too Broad: Everybody has bad days sometimes.

Too Narrow: I had a bad day yesterday.

Just Right: Every time I have a bad day, I learn something about myself.

3. **A good thesis statement usually argues a point of view.** Remember, an effective thesis statement should state the writer's opinion about a given topic. Thus, in college writing, thesis statements are almost always argumentative that can be questioned or challenged by the reader. It should not merely announce the paper's subject or make a factual statement about a topic.

Not Argumentative (announcement of paper's subject): I want to share some thoughts with you about our space program.

Not Argumentative (statement of fact): The United States space program grew extensively during the Cold War.

Argumentative: Investing money in our space program is a misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

4. **A good thesis statement is concise.** Because the thesis statement's purpose is to make the paper topic clear, the sentence itself should be clear and concise, only giving the most relevant information.

5. **A good thesis statement is specific, not vague.** Make sure the thesis statement contains specific language.

Too Vague: Hemingway's war stories are really good.

More Specific: Hemingway's war stories helped to create a new prose style.

6. **A good thesis statement is strong.** The thesis statement should be as strong as possible. This means avoiding weak phrasing such as "in my opinion," "I believe," "I think," and "it seems to me." Since you, the writer wrote the paper, it is obvious that the content of the paper is your opinion, so the aforementioned phrases are unnecessary.

Two Kinds of Thesis Statements:

1. The enumerative thesis (a.k.a. “three-point” thesis) lists the evidence that supports your primary argument. Each body paragraph discusses one piece of evidence.

Example: The writers of *Futurama* use irreverent humor to satirize pop culture, comment on technology, and explore controversial themes.

2. The umbrella thesis encompasses the entire argument in a concise statement without naming each piece of evidence that the author plans to use.

Example: The irreverent humor used in *Futurama* is not used simply to entertain but to comment on deeper societal issues.

For more information about the different kinds of thesis statements, refer to the Analytical vs. Persuasive Thesis Statements DLA.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Thesis Statement Review

What are the six elements of a “good” thesis statement?

2. Three-Point Thesis Statement

Again, review the above information. Then for two of the general subjects below, compose **three-point** thesis statements that assert your opinion only. Write something resembling the following:

- **Example:** Online classes help working-students complete college faster, save money, and offer more flexibility.

Rising tuition

Student loans

Bilingual education

College/university parking

Hybrid classes

Immigration and education

1.

2.

□ 3. Umbrella Thesis Statement

Revise the two thesis statements from above by changing them into **umbrella** thesis statements. Here is an example:

- **Example:** Online classes help working-students complete college faster and offer many financial and personal benefits.

1.

2.

□ 4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

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