

Student Workshop



Writing A Thesis Statement

After finding a topic, but before writing the paper, you must write a thesis statement. An effective thesis statement helps you focus and establish a paper's purpose. A thesis statement also helps readers, guiding them through the paper. An effective thesis statement tells them what you learned about your topic, describes what evidence led to your conclusion, and helps readers understand your argument. Basically, the thesis statement communicates the central point of a paper and answers the following question: What do you want to prove?

The following checklist may help you write an effective thesis statement:

- Write an opinion a person could agree with or argue against.
- Limit the scope of your thesis statement so it is not broad. Check, however, that you have enough information to support the thesis.
- Assert your opinion about the subject clearly and concisely.
- Write the thesis as a statement instead of a question.
- Use third-person point of view, instead of first-person: *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they* instead of *I* and *me*.
- Limit your thesis statement to a complete sentence of, at most, 25 words.

A thesis statement is not a fact, generalization, exaggeration, or announcement of the essay's topic.

Examples of Ineffective and Effective Thesis Statements

Thesis Statements	Effective or Ineffective	Rationale
The federal government must solve the housing crisis.	Ineffective	Too broad, vague, or general
The federal government must address the current housing crisis by freezing subprime mortgage rates to allow the housing market to recover.	Effective	Specific
This essay talks about gender equity.	Ineffective	An announcement
Because men earn significantly more than women, employers must narrow	Effective	May be agreed upon or argued

the earning gap between genders.		
I believe the media hurt young girls' self-esteem by always portraying women as beautiful and thin.	Ineffective	Written in first-person point of view
When the media portray women as beautiful and thin, young girls' self-esteem suffers.	Effective	Written in third-person point of view
Does the recent ban on smoking in public discriminate against smokers?	Ineffective	A question
The recent ban on smoking in public discriminates against those who smoke.	Effective	A statement
A photo-radar camera on the corner of Main Street and 33rd Avenue in Phoenix must be installed.	Ineffective	Too narrow
Photo-radar cameras must be installed in highly congested traffic areas.	Effective	Broader
The Iraq war has been expensive.	Ineffective	A fact
The Iraq war has not been cost-effective in terms of human life or monetary expenditures.	Effective	A supportable opinion
Movie moguls do not care about making family films.	Ineffective	An exaggeration
Diminishing movie revenues could be bolstered by producing more family films.	Effective	A reasonable point
The benefits of online learning.	Ineffective	Incomplete sentence
Online learning provides numerous benefits to adult learners.	Effective	Complete sentence

The Thesis Generator at the Center for Writing Excellence, in Tutorials & Guides, may help you draft your thesis statement.

Thesis Statement Placement

When you write an effective thesis statement, what do you do with it? In a five-paragraph essay, you place it at the end of the first paragraph. The placement of the thesis statement is displayed in the diagram below.

Sections	Paragraphs
Introduction (thesis statement)	Paragraph 1

Body (support for thesis statement)	Paragraphs 2-4
Conclusion (restatement of thesis statement)	Paragraph 5

©2009 University of Phoenix. All rights reserved.