

Thesis Statement Qualities & Samples

Specific

- Particular subject(s), details, types of evidence.
- What content can we expect from this writing?

Not a thesis statement

“This paper will address the characteristics of a good corporate manager.”

This example doesn't tell us which characteristics, why they are being addressed, or how they are being addressed. Is this a critique of common misperceptions? A recommendation for best practices?

Revision

“The very trait that makes for an effective corporate manager—the drive to succeed—can also make the leader domineering and therefore ineffective.”

The writer now focuses on one particular common characteristic and challenges its value.

Arguable

- Your claim; open to disagreement; needs explanation, proof.
- What will I learn from you?

Not a thesis statement

“There is much controversy around the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site. Some people support the current plan to rebuild corporate towers, while others suggest that a non-commercial use for the Manhattan site might be more appropriate. Some critics go as far as to suggest that the plot should be left empty so as to memorialize the losses of September 11.”

This summarizes others' various opinions on rebuilding, but does not claim how the site should be used.

Revision

“Although developers are planning on rebuilding the World Trade Center site as a block of corporate towers, non-commercial use would better serve the memory of 9/11 victims and provide much needed public space in an otherwise privatized section of Manhattan.”

The writer takes a position: the World Trade Center site would be best served by non-commercial use.

Narrow

- Limited content; precise areas of concern (population, time period, . . .).
- What can you accomplished in this piece?

Not a thesis statement

“Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the internet, and web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.”

Is this paper exploring all the many ways the internet is useful in marketing or all the ways websites alone are useful to companies?

Narrow (cont.)

Revision

“Websites are the best option for companies to utilize the internet’s marketing potential because they can provide both advertising and customer support.”

This thesis tells me that the paper is focused on websites, but might mention a few other options on the internet for the sake of highlighting websites’ superiority.

Defensible

- Within the means of your research and support materials.
- Do you have enough convincing evidence for all these claims?

Not a thesis statement

“Applebee’s should revamp their menu because none of the food is good.”

It seems like all we’ll get are examples of bad food and/or poll results on the menu.

Revision

“Applebee’s could revolutionize chain restaurants and gain both fiscal success and culinary renown with a new menu focused on quality ingredients and recipes instead of large portions of mediocre food.”

Now there’s plenty of room for unbiased evidence: the qualities of chain restaurants, the monetary effects of improving a menu, and Applebee’s status as a restaurant.

Original

- A new idea; something distinct from all other claims on the topic.
- What new perspective or connections can you bring to the discussion?

Not a thesis statement

“Jane Smith argues that railroad racks are archeological residue of the Industrial Revolution. This essay will explain how true that statement is.”

This argument has already been made, and probably proven. Will this essay simply summarize, or worse—copy, Smith’s work?

Revision

“Jane Smith’s argument that railroad tracks are archeological residue of the Industrial Revolution is evidence of our distorted sense of time’s passage brought on by unprecedented advances in technology within our lifetime.”

Instead of resting with an intriguing claim from your research, ask yourself why it’s interesting. Draw connections to other things you’re thinking and learning about to come up with a new claim. Push the first idea further to make a new observation on the topic.

Significant

- Impacting discourse within the topic, the genre, the field, etc.
- Why does your claim matter outside this paper? this class? academia?

Not a thesis statement

“Henry James’s Daisy Miller shows us that there really is no place like home.”

While a cliché is often so overused because of its truth, there is nothing interesting or worthwhile about noticing such a truism.

Significant (cont.)

Revision

"In *Daisy Miller*, Daisy is considered flirtatious, uncouth, and manipulative by the European elite, who represent traditional rules of decorum that Daisy stands in both ignorance of and opposition to."

Here, the writer uses the reasons behind that truism, getting closer to an impactful realization about 19th Century America, women of that time period, or perhaps America's relationship with Europe.