THESIS STATEMENT WORKSHEET

Definition

A thesis statement is a sentence that tells your reader your topic, what you think about it, and possibly how you are going to prove it.

Getting started

Create a research question based on your class assignment. Start to read about your topic to generate more ideas for your research and writing.

Collect facts from articles.
Form opinions about articles.
Generate your own ideas about the topic using these facts and opinions.

Create a 1-2 sentence answer to your research question that tells the reader the main idea of the essay.

Thesis statements can always be changed if you add new ideas, find new information, or change the direction of your topic while you are working on your assignment.

General topics vs. Narrow topics

The topic of your assignment should be narrow. You need to give the reader all the information they will need about the topic within the length of the assignment (e.g. 4 pages).

e.g. ✗ Physical exercise (general)
✓ 30 minutes of high intensity exercise per day (narrow)

It is possible to write a focused essay on "30 minutes of high intensity exercise per day" in 4 pages. However, writing 4 pages on everything the reader needs to know about "physical exercise" is impossible.

Exercise #1 Order the following ideas from general (1) to narrow (5).

Vegetables	1. _____
Field crop vegetables	2. _____
Food	3. _____
Genetically modified corn	4. _____
Intensively farmed vegetables	5. _____

Exercise #2 Narrow the following general topic.

Medicine _____

Topics vs. Thesis statements

Topics – the general subject of the essay

e.g. Taking risks

Thesis statements – 1-2 sentences that tell the reader your topic and what you will say about it.

e.g. Biological need, social environment, and psychological satisfaction are three reasons why people take risks.

Direct (stated) and indirect (implied) thesis statements

Direct thesis statements outline the main idea and the organization of the essay for the reader.

e.g. The main problems facing South American countries are a lack of job opportunities for citizens, increasing demand for better health care, and limited university programs for poor students.

Indirect thesis statements introduce the topic, but they do not outline the supporting ideas. The reader must read the essay to learn about these points.

e.g. The important problems facing South American countries today require immediate attention.

Both types of thesis statements are possible, but some writers or instructors prefer a specific style.

COMPONENTS OF THESIS STATEMENTS

1. **Topic –** the general subject of the essay

   e.g. Teenage Smokers

2. **Controlling idea –** your opinion/belief/view/feeling about the topic

   e.g. Public health departments need aggressive promotional campaigns

3. **Sub-topics (Optional) –** the areas you will focus on to support your idea

   e.g. Damages the lungs, increases the risk of cancer, raises the chance of heart disease

Thesis statement – Public health departments need to target teenage smokers with aggressive promotional campaigns in order to combat lung damage, cancer, and heart disease among this group.

Exercise #3 Order the following ideas from general (1) to narrow (5).

Underline the topic, circle the controlling idea, and double underline the sub-topics in the following thesis statements.

e.g. My roommate has her own unique systems for studying, writing essays, and cleaning our living room.

1. Stress in the fast-food workplace has led to serious physical, psychological, and emotional problems for employees.

2. Women generally live longer than men as a result of their better overall concern about their health, and their better resistance to stress.

3. Healthy lifestyles require individuals to get enough sleep, eat nutritiously, and exercise regularly.

CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT FROM A RESEARCH QUESTION

The thesis statement in an essay should answer your research question.

e.g. ***Research question:*** *Why do people become homeless?*

Thesis statement: *The lack of affordable housing, inadequate public assistance, and the breakdown of the family are three causes of homelessness.*

Exercise #4 Which is the best thesis statement for the following topic? Why?

1. Research question: How does junk food affect health?

Focus of the research question: ***Effects***
Answers to the research question (Sub-topics): ***Poor nutrition***
Weight gain
Inability to concentrate

◯ A: Eating junk food results in poor nutrition, weight gain, and inability to concentrate.

◯ B: Junk food and health food are different in several ways.

◯ C: Every culture has its own junk food.

Exercise #5 Identify the topic, thesis statement, and supporting sentences in the following groups.

T	***topic***
TH	***thesis statement***
S	***supporting sentence***

1. _____ Vegetarian diets
2. _____ Staying away from meat can reduce intake of fat and cholesterol
3. _____ Eating vegetable helps the environment because raising vegetables uses less energy than raising animals.
4. _____ Vegetarianism benefits both the individual and the environment.
5. _____ Medicine
6. _____ Antibiotics have enabled doctors to control many diseases that were once fatal.
7. _____ Organ transplants have prolonged the lives of tens of thousands of people.
8. _____ Advances in modern medicine have had two great successes in helping people.

INCLUDING SUB-TOPICS IN A THESIS STATEMENT

If sub-topics are listed in a thesis statement, each item follows the same grammatical pattern (parallel or balanced).

e.g. ✗ *The students who do well attend class, they do their homework, and are asking questions in labs.*

✓ *The students who do well attend class, do their homework, and ask questions in labs.*

Exercise #6 Underline the ideas that are parallel.

1. An ideal environment for studying includes good lighting, a spacious desk, and a comfortable chair.

2. You know you are truly fluent in another language when you can calculate in it and when you begin to dream in it.

3. If industrial nations continue to burn fossil fuels and if developing nations continue to burn their rain forests, the level of CO2 in the atmosphere will continue to increase.

Exercise #7 Complete the following thesis statements by adding an idea in parallel form.

1. A good salesperson needs to like people, to be aggressive, and _____

2. Before you begin an exercise program, decide on your exercise goals, pick an activity that can help you achieve those goals, and _____

3. During my first semester at university, I had to learn how to manage my time, my diet, and

_____

THESIS STATEMENT PROBLEMS

Making announcements

Announcements introduce the general topic of the essay, but they do not tell the reader the main point.

e.g. ✗ *The subject of this essay is ...the rising crime rate.*

✗ *I am going to talk about ... the rising crime rate.*

✗ *The rising crime rate ... is the main topic of this paper.*

✓ *The recent increase in the rate of crime in the country is the result of political, social, and economic factors.*

Using general statements

General thesis statements cannot be fully supported in an essay because they need more space than most assignments require.

e.g. ✗ *Men and women are very different.*

✓ *Men and women are treated differently at work for three reasons.*

Using narrow statements

Very focused statements cannot be supported for an entire essay. This is the same with facts.

e.g.
- ✗ *UOIT is located in North Oshawa at the corner of Conlin Road and Simcoe Street North.*
- ✓ *UOIT is ideally located to meet the needs of students in the Durham region and eastern Toronto.*

Including too many ideas

An essay should be about one single idea, so a thesis statement should clearly identify only one main idea.

e.g.
- ✗ *Studying in groups has many advantages, but there are also disadvantages.*
- ✓ *Studying with others benefits university students by increasing motivation, support, and better understanding of course content.*

Stating a fact

Thesis statements should be debatable. They should be argued and supported by the writer.

e.g.
- ✗ *Canadian winters are longer and colder than Italian winters.*
- ✓ *Canadian winters offer the best climate for the development of amateur athletes in skiing, figure skating, and hockey.*

Exercise #8 Choose the best thesis statement in the following pairs.

1.
- ◯ A: I want to show how cardiology has changed in the last 20 years.
- ◯ B: The advances in cardiology over the last 20 years significantly impacted the field of medicine.

2.
- ◯ A: People are living longer than ever due to better diets, a cleaner environment, and improved medical care.
- ◯ B: The average person can now expect to live longer.

3.
- ◯ A: Learning new skills can be difficult and frustrating.
- ◯ B: Learning to write takes work, patience, and determination.

4.
- ◯ A: Although universities offer courses in many European languages, many professors and students see the need to offer Arabic, Chinese, and Hindi as well.
- ◯ B: Many professors and students believe there is a need for university courses in Arabic, Chinese, and Hindi.

5.
- ◯ A: In order to create a successful commercial, it is important to consider the target audience, placement, and media.
- ◯ B: Nike's "Just do it" advertising campaign was created in 1988.

Adapted from:

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