

English



Thesis Statement

What is a thesis?

A thesis is the central idea of a paper. It represents the author's position or beliefs which are supported in the paper.

What does it look like and where does it go?

It is usually one sentence long and is placed near the end of the introductory paragraph of a paper. However, in some cases it may be longer or in a slightly different location.

Points to remember

- The thesis should be phrased as a statement or claim requiring supporting evidence from facts and details that come later in the paper.
- It should be focused. It should not be so vague that it is hard to understand without reading the rest of the paper.
- It should not be too broad or too narrow. Make sure it falls within the guidelines of the assignment. Avoid broad claims and generalizations.
- The rest of the paper's topic sentences and supporting paragraphs should provide support for the ideas within the thesis statement.

Some strong and weak thesis examples

Too broad: **Mapping the human genome has many implications for health and science.** *It would be hard to cover this huge topic in one essay.*

More focused: **A cure for Parkinson's disease can only be found after a thorough and complete mapping of the human genome.**

Too vague: **The way the TV show *ER* portrays doctors and nurses is interesting.**

More specific: **The roles of the doctors and nurses on *ER* portray media-supported gender stereotypes.**



Thesis examples continued...

Too factual: **Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States.**
This statement does not make a claim that can be argued or needs support.

Better: **Thomas Jefferson's political beliefs were vastly different than other politicians of his era.** *This thesis will use supporting evidence from the essay.*

Writing Your Thesis

If you don't know your thesis yet, here are a few steps to help you out. Follow the example using the topic of your own paper.

Step 1.

Ask yourself: What is the topic of this paper?

Answer: *The similarities between myself and Captain Ahab in the novel Moby Dick.*

Step 2.

Ask yourself: What do I believe?

Answer: *I believe we both have had obsessions in our life; Ahab with finding the white whale, and myself with becoming a professional basketball player.*

Step 3.

Remove the "I"s and write the ideas as a statement or claim to be argued in your paper.

Finished thesis: **Captain Ahab's obsession in Moby Dick is similar to my obsession with becoming a professional basketball player.**

The rest of the essay would address the similarities between Capt. Ahab and the writer's obsessions. The paper would use examples from the text, and compare and/or contrast them with examples from the author's obsession with basketball.