

## Creating a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a one or two-sentence summary of the central analysis or argument of an essay.

While the traditional location for a thesis is the last sentence of the first paragraph of an essay, locating the thesis anywhere in the first paragraph where it can be effectively understood by the reader is acceptable in most cases. Check with your professor about his or her particular preferences.

### Common Characteristics of Thesis Statements

-The thesis statement offers a central idea that the paper will then support through appropriate evidence and analysis.

-An effective thesis statement is not just a statement of fact or a description of a topic. A good thesis statement describes for the reader what your particular position is on an issue, or your interpretation of the significance of a particular idea.

Example of a topic description: *The rise of consumerism in America is well-documented in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.* [This sentence merely describes a fact about consumerism, but does not offer an analysis of or opinion about its causes.]

-Avoid a common mistake that students make when trying to construct a thesis statement by eliminating phrases like “In this paper I will explore/argue” etc. While use of the first person is often acceptable when constructing a thesis statement (check with your professor for disciplinary conventions), it is often more effective to simply state the argument or points of analysis directly, without the first person.

-Because thesis statements are included in the introductory paragraph of an essay, necessary background on the issue and its controversies should also be included in this paragraph as a way of setting up the topic which the thesis statement explores. 1

-Most writers begin with a tentative or “working” thesis statement to guide their research and writing process. However, as you develop your draft, you are likely to discover new information and come to a better understanding of your assignment. This process should naturally lead you to refine your thesis statement so that it corresponds more closely with the content you develop for your essay.

### In other words:

Usually appearing in the introduction of an essay, a thesis statement expresses the main idea of the essay. It identifies the **topic** of the essay and it makes an **assertion** about that topic.

*Topic + Assertion about the topic = Thesis*

*Study abroad programs offer excellent learning opportunities.*

*The levee break changed both the geography and the demographics of the flooded areas.*

For the writer, the thesis is a blueprint to follow throughout the writing process.

For the reader, the thesis is a road map telling the reader what's to come.

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An expository essay "exposes" the reader to a new topic; it informs the reader with details, descriptions, or explanations of a subject. If you are writing an expository essay, your thesis statement should explain to the reader what he or she will learn in your essay.

- Eggs contain many of the ingredients that your body needs for good health.
- The rewarding process of photographing a lunar eclipse requires careful preparation and sound equipment.
- The Mesa Verde National Park reveals the fascinating culture of the Ancestral Puebloans who lived on the land for more than seven hundred years.
- The Spanish Inquisition is characterized by religious persecution that was often carried out with extreme cruelty.

You can see how the statements above provide a statement of fact about topic (not just opinion), but this statement leaves the door open for you to elaborate with lots of details. The good thesis statement in an expository essay leaves the reader wanting more details!

Expository essays seek to describe an idea or issue for the reader. The thesis for this type of essay will define the boundaries of the topic for the reader, usually by identifying specific qualities or categories that will be explored in the essay. 2

Example of expository thesis: The typical college student of the twenty-first century utilizes technology in a variety of ways, to complete academic assignments, to interact socially with peers and family, and to access information.

Discussion: An expository essay utilizing this thesis statement would describe how technology is used with the different components mentioned: academics, social interaction, and information access.