

# Writing an Essay: Thesis Statements

Note: These reference guides do not take the place of assignment guidelines



A thesis statement tells the reader the main idea of the paper. In research papers, thesis statements are typically placed at the end of the introductory paragraph. It summarizes the writer's position, which should be debatable rather than a statement of fact. When establishing your position with the thesis statement, you want to make sure that you are broad enough to cover all points made in the paper, but narrow enough to present a specific argument or claim.

## Strong Thesis Statement Vs Weak Thesis Statement

Weak thesis statement: On average, college graduates earn more money than high school graduates.

Stronger thesis statement: State spending on educational initiatives promoting college graduation should be increased by 25%.

The first thesis statement is weak because it is simply stating a fact that is not debatable. In contrast, the second thesis statement presents a position that can be supported with facts and research, but which is not inherently true or false.

Weak thesis statement: Education is the most important issue in the upcoming political campaign.

Stronger thesis statement: To win the vote of citizens concerned about education, political candidates should focus on key outcomes including higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and increased spending per student.

In this case both thesis statements are debatable, but the first is very broad and would require quite a lot of research and writing to examine. The second statement narrows the focus by addressing the specific indicators of educational achievement, which can be examined in more depth with less overall research and writing.

## Some Helpful Hints

- It can help to have a thesis developed before you begin writing, but it is not required. If you do not have a thesis statement yet, a topic sentence for your paper would work just as well (see our handout on Choosing a Topic for more information).
- Think about the points within your thesis as mini-topics for each of your paragraphs, and use them to guide you as you develop your body paragraphs.
- When the first draft is completed, review the paper to ensure that all points agree with the thesis sentence. You may find that what you wrote differs from your original thesis, which is a common occurrence. Just make sure you revise your thesis to reflect your essay.