

Thesis Writing Guidelines

A thesis is a one- or two-sentence long statement of your controlling idea or central argument. It will often take the form of an answer to a given essay question, and it will usually appear near the end of an introductory paragraph.

An effective thesis sentence is a central idea that requires supporting evidence, is of adequate scope for an essay of the assigned length, and is sharply focused.

An introductory paragraph should hook your reader first (with a vivid example, a short bit of quoted material, a ironic or paradoxical statement, a question or analogy or anecdote), then introduce your topic and source text, and then lay out the main push of the essay, the thesis.

A thesis sentence focuses your argument for the reader, where the body of your work will consist of evidence and discussion that supports your thesis.

Some questions to ask yourself as you draft your thesis:

Does my thesis statement make an arguable assertion rather than:

- (a) merely asserting an unarguable fact or opinion?
- (b) simply announcing a topic without taking a clear position on it?
- (c) declaring a subjective belief unconnected to the focus of the essay itself?

Is the statement broad enough to cover the entire argument that I will be presenting, and is it narrow enough for me to be able to cover the topic in the space allotted?

Is the thesis too obvious? If I can't come up with positions that oppose my own, then I should revise my argument.

Do I have enough evidence to support my thesis? Does it actually require an essay's worth of development, or will I run out of points too quickly?

After reading my thesis statement back to myself, can I articulate why readers will want to read an essay with this thesis?