

What is a thesis statement?

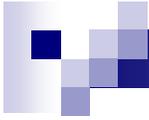


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- A thesis statement is a sentence that communicates the main idea of your paper to the reader.
 - Your thesis tells the reader what point you are going to make about your topic.
 - If someone were to ask you, "What is the main idea you want people to believe after reading your paper?", the sentence you would give in reply is your thesis statement.
 - Remember that a thesis statement does more than simply introduce the reader to the topic of your paper; a thesis statement takes a stand on a topic.



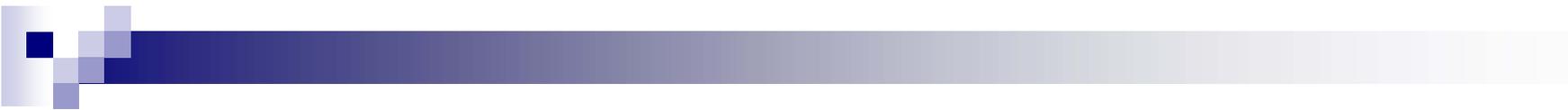
Example:

- Topic: Researching information on the internet
 - Thesis: Researching information on the internet has many disadvantages, including unreliable web sites, the large amount of time it takes to find valuable information, and the difficulty of verifying the truth of the information found.



Why is a thesis statement necessary?

- Aside from making a paper more organized, a thesis causes you to focus your thoughts as you write.
- Knowing what the main point of your essay is allows you to narrow down your information.
- You are then able to include information that is relevant to your paper and weed out any unnecessary data.



Examples of how a thesis statement can be written:

- A good thesis statement can be written in four different ways (or a combination of these styles may be used).
 - A strong controversial statement--
 - Bilingual education has not fulfilled its early promise.
 - A call to action--
 - All inner-city schools should set up bilingual programs.
 - A question that will be answered in the essay--
 - What can bilingual education accomplish for a child? It can lead to academic and personal development.
 - A preview or forecast of the structure of the essay—
 - Bilingual education suffers from two main problems: the shortage of trained teachers and the lack of parental involvement.



A thesis statement in a persuasive essay:

- A thesis in a persuasive essay demonstrates where you stand on the issue. Although you consider alternative and opposing arguments, you state your opinion clearly. Here is an example of a weak thesis statement in a persuasive essay and its revision.
 - Bilingual education has advantages and disadvantages.
- This is a statement of fact; it does not express a conclusion or take a stand on the issue. This statement is too vague.



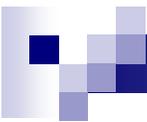
Revision:

- A bilingual program is more effective than an immersion program in helping students to succeed academically.
- This thesis is not a simple statement of fact, but rather an opinion that will be supported with evidence in the paper.



Final thesis tips:

- Once you have developed a good thesis, write it on an index card and prop it up next to your computer so you will stick to the main point of your paper as you write.
- Also, remember that you may want to change your thesis statement as you discover new views and information, and that's okay. It's easier to change your thesis to fit the information in your paper than it is to go back and try to fit your information to your thesis.
- The paragraphs in the body of your paper following the introduction can include concrete details, examples/incidents, facts and statistics, and supporting arguments.
 - The number of paragraphs in the body of your paper will be determined by the content of your paper. Remember, it is a good idea to stick to one main idea per paragraph, without switching to new topics or digressing.

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- Each sentence within your paragraphs should relate to the main topic sentence of that paragraph (the sentence that states what the paragraph is going to be about - usually located at the beginning of each new paragraph). In addition, each paragraph in your essay should support or relate in some way to your thesis statement.
 - To check whether you are sticking to one topic per paragraph and whether your paragraphs are related closely enough to your thesis, try doing a backwards outline. After you have finished writing your draft, count the number of paragraphs in your essay, writing the numbers on a separate sheet of paper. Then skim your draft and write down enough words next to each number to represent what is in each paragraph.
 - Your concluding paragraph should also include (usually at the very beginning or the very end of your paragraph) a restatement of your thesis using different words. You should end your conclusion on a strong note, without apologizing for anything in your paper and without introducing completely new ideas that were not covered in your paper. It is often a good idea to end your conclusion with a call to action or a comment regarding the future as related to your topic.