

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Thesis sentence or thesis paragraph

Your thesis is the “mission statement” (not just a summary) of your paper *(AU Writing Center)*

- What are you trying to prove or show?
- Why is your paper important?

Your thesis is your main point.

- It’s an argument – a thought not everyone holds but you’re going to defend

It is the roadmap for the reader.

- It tells where you’re taking him/her.
- It reassures that you have a plan.
- You must follow it.

And ... the paragraphs’ topic sentences are your signposts – moving the story along the way for you.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

FORM: Grammatical, natural, interesting.

Conforms to other rules of good writing.

Declarative sentence.

Often reflects structure of analysis.

“Hamburgers are more nutritious than pizza.”

“The economy is (or appears) headed toward a crash.”

“The riots in the streets spell big trouble for the regime.”

“She won the election by a landslide, but the people’s unrealistic expectations and splits in her own party pose major challenges.”

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Thesis or not a thesis?

- With new technologies, coal will become the cleanest fossil fuel.
- Wyoming is America's biggest coal producer.
- William Howard Taft was the most obese president in U.S. history.
- FDR did more to help the American people than any president in U.S. history.

Wyoming: 375.8 (42%)
West Virginia: 95.6 (11%)
Kentucky: 61.4 (7%)
Illinois: 56.1 (6%)
Pennsylvania: 50.0 (6%)

340 pounds

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Thesis or not a thesis?

- Obamacare brought 20 million people into health insurance plans.
- Obamacare is a disaster that almost certainly will be replaced.
- Canada's border with the U.S. is two and a half times longer than Mexico's.
- Security along Mexico's border with the U.S. is much more tenuous than along Canada's border.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

It is the main analytical hypothesis/conclusion – developed as you research and think.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Main analytical requirement | ➔ | Why civil war in Syria? |
| 2. Main hypothesis | ➔ | Various historical, ethnic, economic, and external factors |
| 3. Research | ➔ | Evidence supporting each factor |
| 4. Main conclusion | ➔ | Judgment about importance of factors, probabilities, etc. |
| 5. Thesis statement | ➔ | Concise statement of key conclusion(s) |

THE THESIS STATEMENT

Or, simply put, the thesis sentence is the concise, validated, substantiated answer to your analytical question.

It is written in the voice you think is most appropriate for your ...

CLIENT

his/her needs
his/her options
his/her style

REQUIREMENT

scope
level of technicality

INSTITUTION

mission/ mandate
corporate style

EXAMPLES

What is happening in Syria?

The civil war in Syria has deep roots in ethnic tensions, but the current surge in fighting appears heavily influenced by external support to the competing factions.

CLIENT

his/her needs
his/her options
his/her style

REQUIREMENT

scope
level of technicality

INSTITUTION

mission/ mandate
corporate style

EXAMPLES

Will Raúl Castro really step down next February?

President Castro will retain the title of Communist Party first secretary after officially retiring in 2018, but his governing style suggests he will not cling to power – clearing the way for a new generation to take over.

CLIENT

his/her needs
his/her options
his/her style

REQUIREMENT

scope
level of technicality

INSTITUTION

mission/ mandate
corporate style

THE THESIS STATEMENT – Quality Control

As always ...

In early drafting, don't choke yourself, but later – when refining – ask yourself:

- Does my thesis statement answer the question I set out to answer?
- Is it more than a statement of fact? Does it contain analysis (implicitly or explicitly)?
- Does it contain my MAIN conclusion?
- If I had only 10 seconds to tell my story, would my thesis statement do the job?

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS???