

## Thesis Statements That Work

A thesis statement is a sentence or two that sums up the main idea of your paper or speech. It states your position and provides a map for organizing your ideas.

BEFORE you write your thesis statement:

- complete reading all the required material,
- write out all your thoughts and ideas,
- discover what you are trying to say, and
- state your position.

THEN draft your thesis to help you organize your paper:

1. Make sure it responds to all parts of the writing prompt.
2. Consider your audience; what type of evidence is expected?
3. Note transitions to make your ideas/main points relate to your thesis and to each other.

Listen to your thesis: What does it tell you about how to organize your paper? What transitional words that fit your organizational strategy can you use?

Describe a process	Focus on steps--“how” (transitions: <i>first, then, as soon as, second, next, before, meanwhile, during, finally</i> )
Analyze a problem	Focus on causes and/or effects ( <i>because, as a result, for this reason, if/then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, thus</i> )
Discuss an issue	Focus on important components--what makes it an issue ( <i>most importantly, moreover, in addition, also, besides, however, furthermore</i> )
Narrate an event	Focus on concrete details organized by time ( <i>then, afterward, eventually, until, previously, at that time, at first, before that, since</i> )
Respond to a text	Focus on components most important to the reader (first impression) ( <i>most importantly, moreover, in addition, also, besides, however, furthermore, to sum up</i> )
Critique a text	Focus on components of a text or image and analyze them ( <i>according to, in other words, in the same way, similarly, in contrast, whereas, although it is true, admittedly, therefore, in conclusion</i> )

ALSO, examine your thesis, asking the following questions:

Does the thesis state just one idea?

Does it make an assertion instead of, for example, merely stating a fact?

Is the thesis sufficiently limited to meet length expectations?

Is it specific?

## Example

<b>Strong Thesis</b>	<b>Weak Thesis</b>
<p>Multitasking between recreational technology and studying impairs students' learning and does not prepare them for the real world of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focuses on one idea—multitasking is bad for learning</li><li>• makes an assertion about multitasking</li><li>• sufficiently narrow and specific</li><li>• Provides a map for discussing the issue by focusing on its components</li></ul>	<p>Multitasking may have negative aspects, and students can learn better if they focus on one task at a time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expresses more than one idea (one is about multitasking; another one about student learning)</li><li>• vague (the reader doesn't know what the negative aspects are and why talk about them)</li><li>• fails to provide a map</li></ul>

FINALLY, after finishing your first draft, read your thesis to see if you need to revise it.

## Exercise

A. Make these thesis statements stronger:

1. Teenagers should not get married.

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2. Going to college prepares a person for the future, and it is increasingly expensive.

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3. There are many types of students in college today.

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B. Practice writing thesis statements using these prompts:

1. More and more students are interested in taking online classes because of the convenience. If you have taken an online class, compare and contrast the experience with traditional classroom learning.

2. Should American students be required to become fluent in a second language? Is the global culture that is developing today going to affect the lives of average Americans so that they will need to be bi-lingual? If you were required to learn a second language, which one would it be and why?