

How to Write a Thesis Statement



Choose one of the following and answer it in one sentence



- Why did Cinderella stay with her stepmother until the prince rescued her?

- Why do some professional athletes in the U.S. get paid millions of dollars?



- If you had to move to another city, where would you live and why?





Pair, Share, Square

- 1) Pair up with someone who answered the same question.
- 2) Read your sentence aloud to each other.
- 3) Compliment each other's sentence.
- 4) Find another pair who answered the same question.
- 5) Read your sentences to each other.
- 6) Choose the best sentence of the 4 and write it **LARGE** on a sheet of paper or shower board.

Class Discussion

- What made these sentences the best?
- What do they have in common?

Did the sentences:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give some reasons?



How is an essay like a trip? How is the writer like a tour guide?

If an essay is like going on a trip, then the writer is the tour guide because the tour guide gets to decide what is important for the readers, the people taking the trip, to see. But first, the tour guide must find out lots of information about the topic....



If an essay is like a trip, how is a thesis is like a road map?

Then, the tour guide must develop a plan for taking the people through the 3 places (paragraphs) which will give them the most information about the topic and support the writer's position on the topic.

In one sentence, the writer will tell the readers where they are going and why. That's a thesis.

For example...





Is Austin a good place to live?

Position: Austin rocks!

Thesis: Families and singles should move to Austin because of the outstanding University of Texas, beautiful Lady Bird Lake, and delicious Mexican food.

Road map: UT, Lady Bird Lake, Chuy's

Position: Austin stinks!

Thesis: It is surprising that anyone ever chooses to live in Austin because of its terrible traffic, dying malls, and high summer temperatures.

Road map: IH-35 at rush hour, Highland Mall, any large parking lot at noon in August

What does a good thesis do?

Answers
the
question

Takes
a
position

Gives
topics for
paragraphs

**The road to a great essay starts with
an excellent thesis!**



The 3 Rules of a Good Thesis



1) Answers the question.

- Be specific.

2) Takes a position.

- The reader should be able to agree or disagree with your position.

3) Mentions the topics for your supporting paragraphs.

- Tell how your paper is going to be organized.

More Ideas for a Good Thesis

- Don't ask a question
- Don't use first or second person – I, you, we
- Don't use qualifiers that make you sound uncertain such as might, maybe, perhaps, etc.
- Don't use absolute qualifiers that mean everything, all, none, always, never. These are too hard to prove!
- Don't use “to be” verbs – am, are, is, was, were, be, being, been. They aren't descriptive enough.
- Do use relative qualifiers which show real-world variation such as often, primarily, frequently, too often, regularly, some, many, most. These are much easier to prove!

In other words...



Words to Avoid:

- I, you, we
- might
- maybe
- perhaps
- all
- none
- always
- never
- am, are, is, was,
were, be, being, been



Words to Use:

- often
- primarily
- frequently
- too often
- regularly
- some
- many
- most

Thesis Types to Avoid

Reading Rainbow

“Have you ever thought about the Alamo?”
(Don’t use a question or the word “you.”)

Charles Dickens

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

(Take a stand! Choose: best or worst)

Laundry List

“California has many problems such as air pollution in Los Angeles, traffic on I-5, earthquakes in San Francisco, high cost of living in San Jose and the government has a lot of debt.”

(List is too long and too specific – don’t write the whole essay in the thesis.)

Strategy #1-Which Thesis is Best?

Question: Who is the most valuable player in the NBA?



Thesis 1: Does LeBron James's ability to score makes him the league's most valuable player?

Thesis 2: LeBron James's ability to score, pass, and rebound make him the league's most valuable player.

Thesis 3: LeBron James's ability to score, pass, and rebound just might make him the league's most valuable player.

Strategy #1

Question: Who is the most valuable player in the NBA?

Thesis 2: LeBron James's ability to score, pass, and rebound make him the league's most valuable player.

Does the thesis:

1) Answer the question?

Yes, gives a MVP

2) Take a position.

Yes, James is the MVP

3) Mention the topics for your supporting paragraphs.

Yes, score, pass and rebound



Strategy # 1-Which Thesis is Best?

Question: How are deserts of the world the same and different?

Thesis 1: I am going to tell you about the deserts of the world.

Thesis 2: Deserts of the world, including ones in North and South America, Antarctica, Africa, Australia, and Asia are the same and different.

Thesis 3: Although the deserts of the world have many similarities, they are vastly different in terms of temperature, vegetation, and size.



Strategy #1

Question: How are deserts of the world the same and different?

Thesis 3: Although the deserts of the world have many similarities, they are vastly different in terms of temperature, vegetation, and size.

Does the thesis:

1) Answer the question?

Yes, talks about same/ different and deserts

2) Take a position.

Yes, says they are vastly different

3) Mention the topics for your supporting paragraphs.

Yes, similarities and then differences in terms of temperature, vegetation, size



Strategy #2

How is each thesis better?

Question: Why did the North and South fight the Civil War?

Thesis 1: The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

Thesis 2: While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

Thesis 3: While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.

Strategy #2 – Fill in the Chart

	Answers question	Takes position	Gives topics for supporting paragraphs
Thesis 1			
Thesis 2			
Thesis 3			

Strategy #2 – Fill in the Chart

	Answers question	Takes position	Gives topics for supporting paragraphs
Thesis 1	Yes, North and South fought Civil War	Same / different reasons	Same Different
Thesis 2	Yes, North and South fought Civil War	Both fought about slavery	North = moral South = preserve institutions
Thesis 3	Yes, North and South fought Civil War	Both fought against tyranny and oppression	North = oppression of slaves South = right to self-government

Strategy #3

Question: Was the U.S. right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?

Thesis 1: The U.S. was right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima for both military and moral reasons.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?



Strategy #3

Question: Was the U.S. right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?

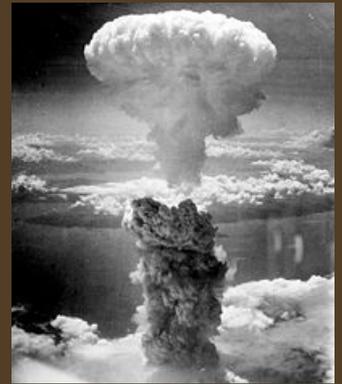
Thesis 2: The U.S. was not right in dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima for either military and moral reasons.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?



Strategy #3



Question: Was the U.S. right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?

Thesis 3: The U.S. was right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima for military reasons but not for moral reasons.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?**
- 2) Take a position?**
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?**

Strategy # 4



Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

Thesis: The life of Christopher Columbus had a lasting impact on the world.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?**
- 2) Take a position?**
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?**

Strategy # 4

Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

Thesis: I am going to tell you that Christopher Columbus was an explorer.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?



Strategy # 4



Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

Thesis: My report is on how Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?

Strategy # 4



Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

In pairs, write a thesis and make sure that it

(1) answers the question

(2) takes a position

(3) gives topics for supporting paragraphs

Strategy # 4



Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

Trade thesis statements with another pair.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?

Strategy # 4



Question: How did Christopher Columbus' trip to the Americas change the world?

Thesis: Columbus was the world's first imperialist as he claimed political, cultural and economic control in the Americas.

Does the thesis:

- 1) Answer the question?
- 2) Take a position?
- 3) Give topics for supporting paragraphs?

Strategy # 5

Let's look at our beginning questions again with social studies eyes...

- Why did enslaved people in the South not have more rebellions?
- Are highly paid athletes the product of a free enterprise economic system?
- What are the most important pull factors which might encourage someone to move to a particular city?

Strategy #5

Rework your thesis from the first slide so that it answers the corresponding question below

- Why did enslaved people in the South not have even more rebellions?
- Are highly paid athletes the product of a free enterprise economic system?
- What are the most important pull factors which might encourage someone to move to a particular city?

Strategy #5

Thesis Scoring Guidelines

0 – Not present

1 – Present but flawed and incomplete

2 – Present

3 – Present and sophisticated

Score _____ Fully addresses the question

Score _____ Takes a position

Score _____ Provides topics for supporting paragraphs

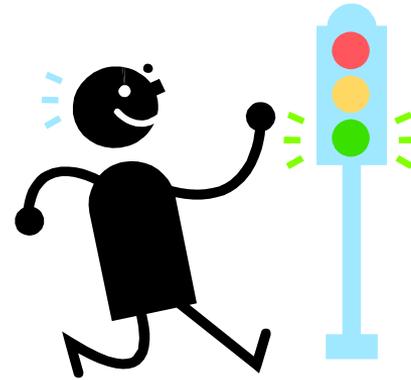
Strategy #5



- 1) Pair up with your original partner.
- 2) Share your thesis statements.
- 3) Write a better thesis statement together.
- 4) Get three score cards for your pair.
- 5) Leave your thesis statement on your desk.
- 6) As a pair, go to another desk, read the thesis statement, and score it.
- 7) Do the same with two more thesis statements.
- 8) As a class, vote for and discuss the best thesis statements in the class.

What makes a good thesis statement?

- 1) Answer the question!
- 2) Take a position!
- 3) Give topics for your supporting paragraphs!





Exit Slip

Choose one of the following and answer in at least 3 lines:

- What should our warm up be tomorrow?
- How do you decide what position you should take when writing an essay?
- What are the 3 parts of a good thesis statement?

