

Thesis Statements

- A thesis statement articulates an informed opinion based on objective, scholarly research. It is a single sentence that answers the assignment prompt and corresponding research question. It is composed of two parts: a claim and an organizing principle.

Components of a Thesis Statement

Claim + Organizing Principle [*reason 1, reason 2, and reason 3*]

- The claim directly answers the research question and assignment prompt.
- The organizing principle consists of *reasons* that support the validity of the claim. In addition, the order in which the reasons are presented is how students need to order the subsequent sections and paragraphs of their papers.

—Example—

Prompt: Compare and contrast waffles and pancakes.

Research Question: What do consumers prefer, waffles or pancakes?

Answer: thesis statement

“Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes because of their density, texture, and flavor.”

Claim

**Organizing
Principle**

- ✓ The claim directly responds to the assignment prompt and research question.
- ✓ The organizing principle outlines distinct supporting points (density, texture, and flavor), which also provides organization for the body paragraphs. Here, the writer will discuss *density* first, then *texture*, and lastly *flavor*.

Placement of a Thesis Statement

- Academic work is thesis driven. Therefore, students should include thesis statements in academic assignments, including discussion posts, essays, research papers, etc.
- Thesis statements traditionally appear as the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. However, shorter assignments (e.g. discussion posts) may require students to begin the first paragraph with the thesis statement in order to conserve space and word count.
- Remember, the composition of thesis statements will vary depending on the length and complexity of the assignment. However, the fundamentals of thesis statements remain the same.

Different Types of Research Papers

Analytical: Breaks down the elements of a topic into its component parts and evaluates issues and ideas in terms of a target focus.

Example Thesis: The meaning of the *Logos* in the Gospel of John cannot be understood without reference to three sources: (1) the works of Philo of Alexandria; (2) Jewish-Hellenistic Wisdom literature; and (3) the Hebrew concept of the *dabar*.

Expository, Explanatory, or Exegetical: Explains or explicates something to the reader.

Example Thesis: The practice of the Eucharistic liturgy of the early church expresses the distinctive contents of Byzantine theology.

Argumentative: Has a premise. Makes a claim and justifies this claim with specific reasons and evidences. The claim could be an opinion, a theory regarding cause-and-effect, a proposal, or an interpretation. The writer's goal is to convince the reader that the claim is warranted or true based on the evidence and logic of the argument.

Example Thesis: The consensus of the rejection of foundationalism in late modernity suggests that postmodern Christian apologetics utilize non-propositional types of argumentation.

QUESTIONS TO TEST THE VALIDITY OF A THESIS STATEMENT:

1. Could one argue against the thesis? Does putting the word "not" in the thesis statement also create a viable thesis? If a reasonable person who read the same text(s) could argue against the thesis, then it is worth defending?
2. Is the thesis worth arguing? Or is it too easy to prove? If the evidence to support the thesis seems to be abundant, it may not be worth arguing. Likewise, if little research or writing exists on the thesis under consideration, then perhaps it is of little serious concern. *The key question to determine relevance is, "So what?"*
3. Is the claim supported with explanation or argumentation?
 - The thesis should have two identifiable parts: a claim that can be, and is, worth debating; an explanation or argument of what, why, how, and/or so what to support the assertion or claim (i.e., the "organizing principle").