

Organization Thesis Statements

The thesis statement is the most important sentence in your entire essay. It gives the essay focus by limiting the topic and direction by arranging ideas. A thesis is often only one sentence in length.

ELEMENTS OF A THESIS STATEMENT

You should tailor your thesis to the specific assignment, but typically a good thesis will:

1. STATE AN ASSERTION

Your thesis should set forth the main idea of the paper. Plus, if the assignment requires persuasive or argumentative writing, you must take a stand; don't simply state a fact or an observation. Then make sure you can adequately support your argument.

OBSERVATION (WEAK): Computers are used in households all over the world.

ARGUMENT (BETTER): With the growing availability of violence and pornography on the internet, parents need to set strict rules for computer use in the home.

2. SET LIMITS ON THE TOPIC

Your thesis should clearly introduce the single, main argument of the paper and all of the major supporting points, showing the paper's scope through the specifics.

VAGUE (WEAK): Parents should take charge of their children's computer use.

SPECIFIC (BETTER): To protect children, parents should use internet filters, set time limits on computer use, and control the rating of computer games in the home.

3. INDICATE ORGANIZATION

In your thesis, the major points should be listed in the same order as they are discussed in the paper.

THESIS: In order to protect their children from violence and pornography, parents need to use internet filters, set time limits on computer use, and control the rating of computer games allowed in the home.

OUTLINE: I. Introduction

II. Parents should use internet filters to make sure their children aren't going to destructive sites.

III. Setting computer time limits will help minimize the risk of children exploring inappropriate sites or games, especially when the children are bored.

IV. In order to reduce the influence of virtual violence, parents must control the ratings of the games their children are playing.

V. Conclusion

HOW TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT

1. Find a topic and research it.

EXAMPLE: Movies based on comic books

2. Identify a main point from your research that you would like to examine further.

EXAMPLE: The writers of the screenplays

3. Write a draft thesis using the topic and the main point.

EXAMPLE: Writers who base their screenplays on comic books have it easy.

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4. **Build the thesis by adding supporting details to indicate the paper's organization.** This sentence may continue to change, so don't worry if it still sounds awkward or unclear.
EXAMPLE: Screenplay writers of comic book movies lack originality because of the use of old materials, original storyboards, and complex characters.
5. **Solidify and refine your final thesis.** Finally, make sure your thesis is clear and smoothly written; more importantly, make sure it matches the paper. If parts of your paper wander away from the thesis, you can cut or modify those sections, change the thesis, or a little of both.
EXAMPLE: While comic book movies are fun to watch, the screenwriters do not show originality because they use previously written material, incorporate existing storyboards, and simply manipulate pre-created complex characters.

As a final check, consider these questions:

- ❖ **Do I meet the requirements of the assignment?** Does your thesis address specific topics required in the assignment? Does it match the type of paper required—for instance, for an argument, do you have a thesis someone could disagree with? If you must analyze, does your thesis examine parts of the speech or story and argue for their effectiveness or significance?
- ❖ **Is my thesis specific or is it too vague and general?** Students who worry about length requirements, or who don't not know the depth and richness of a topic, may write thesis statements that take in too much. If you can find a book on the topic, you simply cannot adequately support your argument in a 5- or even 20-page paper. Can you examine a smaller aspect of this topic or address a more specific angle on this issue. As a simple guideline, avoid vague words such "several," general evaluation words such as "good," or all-encompassing words such as "every" or "none."
- ❖ **Is my position clear, or will my reader say "and your point is?"** The position you've taken on your subject should be clear in the thesis. If the thesis is too open-ended, what can you add to explain your position more clearly? Can you show how your argument is significant in understanding or solving more universal issues? (Adapted from: The Writing Center. "Thesis Statements." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 3 Aug 2006
<<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html>>)

OTHER TIPS

- ◀ Before you write your thesis, take a deep breath. Writing a thesis may seem complicated, but it can be a simple process. Focus yourself before you begin to write, and you'll find it's not so bad.
- ◀ If you're having problems finding or developing your thesis, identify the main idea of each body paragraph and build the thesis from those supporting details.
- ◀ Don't put a great thesis in the middle of a paragraph or late in the paper because it might be overlooked. A better place for your thesis statement is at the end of the introduction—most readers are used to finding it there, and coming at the end of a paragraph gives it emphasis.
- ◀ Your main point may change as you write your paper and refine your ideas. The final version of your thesis probably won't appear until you've revised it several times. However, having a draft-thesis will help give you an idea of what you have and what you want to say.
- ◀ When you feel you've mastered basic thesis statements, try your hand at more subtle or sophisticated types: implicit, exploratory, reflective, narrative, qualified or delayed theses.