

Effective Thesis Statements

Writing Strategies

Writing in any language can be a daunting task. You must be able to tackle advanced structures, spelling and punctuation, among many other things, all while providing a well thought out and coherent idea. This document will address strategies specific to the structure of an essay, and should be paired with the document entitled 'The Five Paragraph Essay' for best effect.

A thesis statement is, quite possibly, the most important sentence that you will write in the entirety of a five paragraph essay. Not only does the thesis statement explicitly state the purpose or the entire paper, but also illustrates the structure that you will use to convey your message. Be warned though, writing effective thesis statements takes practice and precision, as it requires a specific set of requirements in order to be most effective.

Structure

The thesis statement is typically presented as the final sentence of the introductory or first paragraph of any essay. It follows a strict structure and can be visualized in the following formula:

Main argument or subject of entire essay, theme 1, theme 2, and theme 3.

Here we can see that the thesis statement first presents the main argument or subject of the entire essay, summarizing all of the writing that comes ahead. Next it introduces three distinct themes that will follow. Each of these themes will be explained and/or justified in the body paragraphs of the paper, with the first theme

Sources:

http://www.bucks.edu/media/bcccmcdialibrary/pdf/FiveParagraphEssayOutlineJuly08_000.pdf

<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/thesis/>



corresponding to body paragraph two, the second theme to body paragraph three, and the third theme to body paragraph four (remember that body paragraph one was the introduction of your essay).

The thesis statement of your paper should be short and concise, and certainly not exceed 25-30 words in length. It is vital that you not begin to explain any of the points of your essay in the thesis statement, but rather to merely highlight the main points of your essay and then expand upon those ideas later in your body paragraphs. It is also important to note that thesis statements should not be mere statements of fact, but rather illustrate a detailed and thoughtful idea, which will help to heighten the reader's interest in your work.

Examples

Writing thesis statements can get a little confusing, so the next page will illustrate two scenarios of effective thesis statement writing.

Scenario One

You are presented with the following discursive essay topic:

'Some people prefer to work alone while others prefer to work groups. Please state your personal preference and explain why.'

The first thing you should do when you start writing is to plan your essay. This will help you to craft an effective thesis statement and have a solid structure before you start writing. First, you should decide your preference, or decide which one you think is easier to justify. For the sake of this example, the preferred choice will be *working alone*. This is your *main argument*.

Now that you have your main argument, you can identify your three themes that you will cover in the essay. These themes should be general arguments that you can justify or explain within the body paragraphs of your paper. For this topic we will use the following themes:

Theme 1: Working alone allows you to manage your own time effectively

Theme 2: Working alone assures you that the work will always meet your high standards

Theme 3: Working alone gives you total autonomy over your grade

These three themes will correspond to the three body paragraphs of your essay. Now all you have to do is reduce those statements down to a few words and connect them with your main theme. So your thesis statement might look like this:

It is my belief that it is better to work alone because you can manage your own time, you will always be sure that the work meets your standard, and you can have total control of your grade.

The next step is to write the introductory material, justifications of each theme, and conclusion.

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Scenario Two

Your professor has asked you to write an essay about the artwork of Vincent van Gogh.

Again, beginning with the planning of your essay, you should decide on a main argument or subject of your essay. This should be specific enough to elicit interest from the reader. For instance, instead of your main idea being 'Vincent van Gogh was a very important painter because...', try 'Vincent van Gogh's most important artistic phases were...'. This provides more detail and will interest the reader to know which phases you believe are of highest value. Now all you have to do is decide which phases you believe to be the most important. For instance:

Theme 1: Vincent van Gogh's portrait phase was of extremely high importance

Theme 2: The impressionist landscape phase was another significant phase

Theme 3: van Gogh's time in the countryside of Italy represents his third essential phase

So your thesis statement might look like this:

Vincent van Gogh's most important artistic phases were his portrait phase, impressionist phase and his time spent in the countryside of Italy.

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