

Thesis Statements

A **thesis statement** is a sentence (or sentences) that expresses the main ideas of your paper and answers the question or questions posed by your paper. It offers your readers a quick and easy-to-follow summary of what the paper will be discussing and what you as a writer are setting out to tell them.¹ A thesis statement for an **argument paper** needs to have a *claim* and *support*.

Example

Claim : **Banana herb tea supplement poses a potential danger to customers**
Support : *because according to several studies, it promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, which is unsafe.*²

Four Tips for a Strong Thesis Statement

1. Academic Language Thesis statements often avoid first-person language (I, me, my, we). The focus of your thesis should be on the topic or argument instead.

Weaker

My paper will address the economics of our space program.

Stronger

The U.S. space program has a very high cost without any substantial or practical returns to the public.

2. Specificity Avoid thesis statements that are so broad that you can only cover surface-level information. Instead, pick a narrow enough topic to go in-depth. Remember to use detailed and specific language for a strong thesis statement.

Weaker

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

Stronger

*While both sides believed they fought against tyranny, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves and Southerners defended the right to self-government.*³

3. Justifies Discussion A strong thesis should add to an intellectual discussion or debate. A thesis should not argue something that most people already agree on. It is good if reasonable people might disagree with your argument or paper, because that is what makes your paper relevant and compelling to read.

Weaker

Shakespeare was a great playwright.

Stronger

*Shakespeare is regarded as a great playwright, but many of his contemporaries wrote more compelling plays.*⁴

4. Has One Main Idea A thesis should be more than a list of all the sub-ideas in your paper. A thesis should have one main idea that connects all the other ideas in your paper together.

Weaker

Smoking is bad for the public's health and taxes are taking advantage of people's weaknesses.

Stronger

Nicotine use is a damaging addiction, which means profiting from taxing nicotine products is the same as taking advantage of people's addictions and weaknesses.