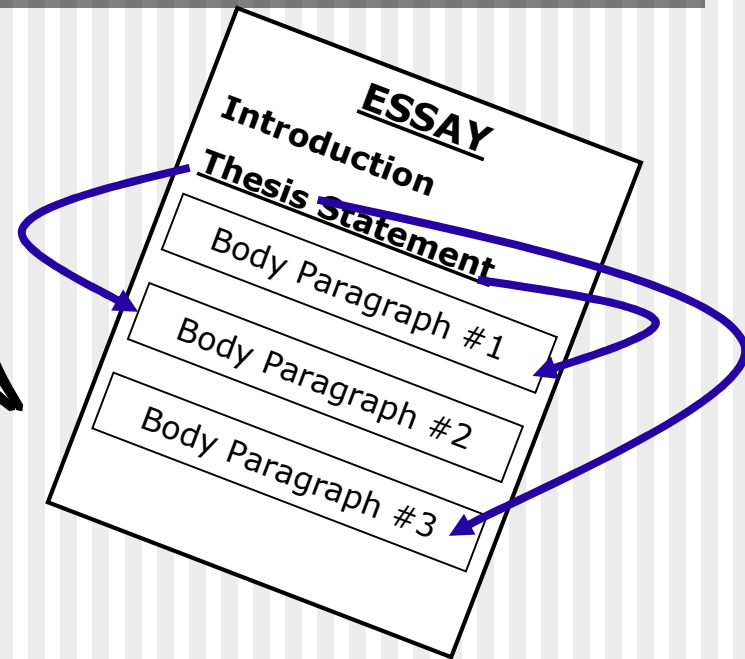
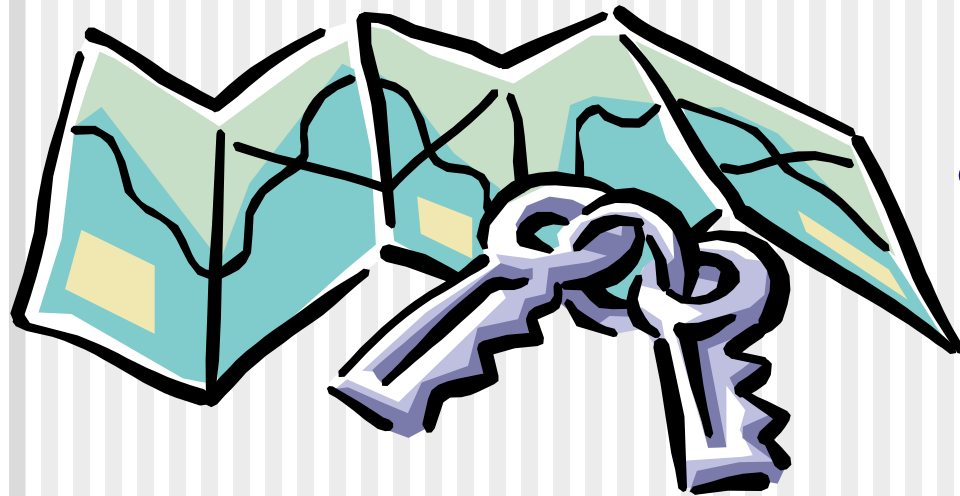


The Thesis Statement

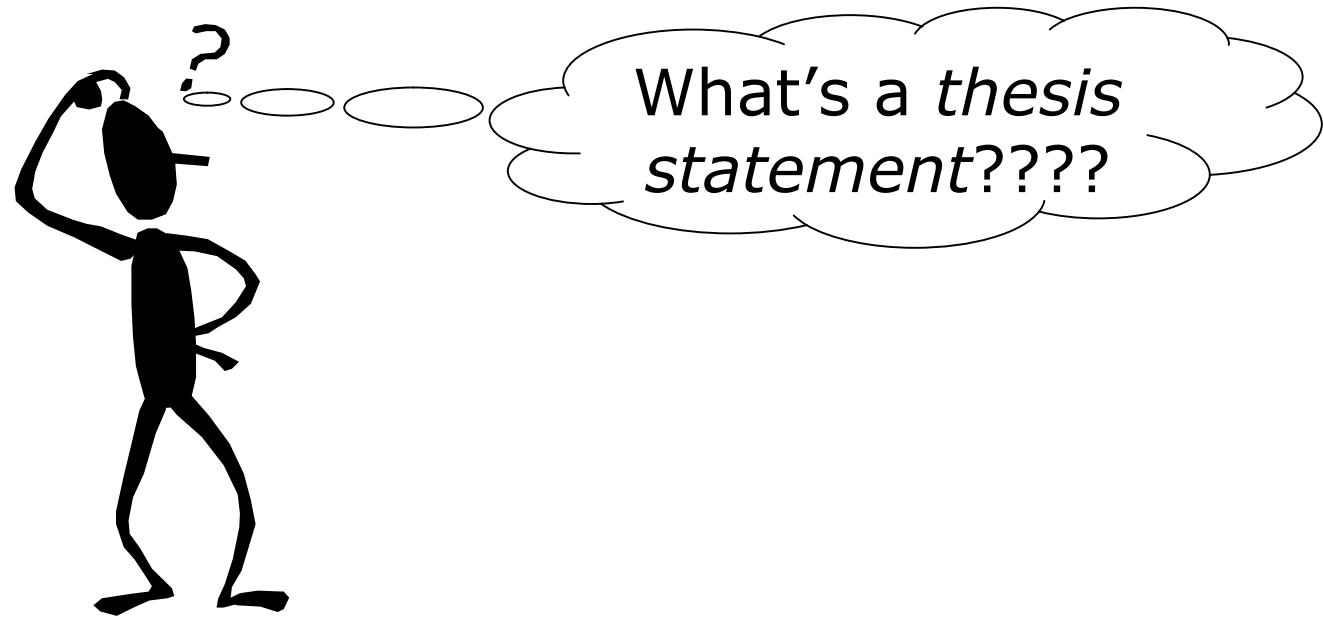
A Road Map for Your Essay



Introduction

Thesis Statements

After you have brainstormed and you have some main ideas of what you would like to write in your essay, you can begin thinking about writing a *thesis statement*.



Definition

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a complete sentence that contains one main idea. This idea controls the content of the entire essay. A thesis statement that contains subpoints also helps a reader know how the essay will be organized. Look at the introductory paragraph below. See if you can identify the thesis statement and subpoints.

Definition

Thesis Statement

When I was young, I always knew that I wanted to become a teacher someday. When I played, I would often gather my dolls together and pretend to teach them how to do math problems or how to read a book. As I grew older, my desire to become an ESL teacher became clearer as I did some volunteer teaching overseas and in the United States. **As I look back on my reasons for becoming a teacher, there are three reasons that stand out.** They are: my love for the English language, my innate interest in how people learn, and my desire to help other people .

The **thesis statement** contains the main idea that controls the content of the essay.

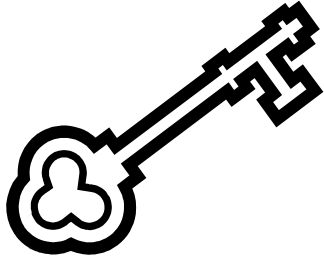
Subpoints in the thesis or nearby help the reader know how the essay will be organized

Thesis Statement Another Example

Psychologists have argued for decades about how a person's character is formed. Numerous psychologists believe that one's birth order (i.e. place in the family as the youngest, oldest, or middle child) has the greatest influence. I believe birth order can have a significant impact in the formation of a child's character based on my own experience growing up in a family of four children. Birth order can strongly affect one's relationship with parents, relationships with others, and how one views responsibility as an adult.

The **thesis statement** contains the main idea that controls the content of the essay.

Subpoints in the thesis or nearby help the reader know how the essay will be organized



Key Features Thesis Statement

- ✓ **states the main idea of the essay in a complete sentence, not in a question.**
- ✓ **is usually at the end of an introduction.**
- ✓ **states an opinion or attitude on a topic. It doesn't just state the topic, itself.**
- ✓ **often lists subtopics.**
- ✓ **does not directly announce your main topic.**

Key Features

Main Idea in a Complete Sentence

Since the thesis statement is the main statement for the entire essay, it should express a complete thought and be a complete sentence. The thesis statement is asserting an opinion or idea, so it should not be a question. Look at the examples below to see how they can be made into thesis statements.

Key Features

Main Idea in a Complete Sentence

~~The sport of cross-country running.~~

This is not a complete sentence.

The sport of cross-country running has allowed me to get in better shape and meet some interesting people.

Thesis Statement

~~Why do I want to be a teacher?~~

This is a question, not a statement.

Being a teacher is a great profession, because it allows me to work with students and be creative.

Thesis Statement

A Complete Sentence Another Example

~~The problem of pollution in big cities.~~

This is not a complete sentence.

The problem of pollution in major cities can be alleviated by limiting the number of cars allowed to drive on city streets and creating more efficient public transportation systems.

Thesis Statement

~~Why should marijuana be legalized?~~

This is a question, not a statement.

Marijuana should be legalized because it is not any more addictive than tobacco and it can provide numerous medicinal benefits for those suffering from terminal illnesses.

Thesis Statement

Key Features Location

Readers like to know what an essay will be about near the beginning of the essay rather than at the end. This is why the thesis statement is often found at the end of the introductory paragraph.

Key Features Location

For most of my life I have lived with bad health, smelly clothes, and a chronic cough. My children and husband begged me to stop the habit that caused these conditions, but I couldn't. The habit of smoking had wrapped its addicting arms around me and was slowly strangling me until one day I realized I had to stop. This realization came after three terrifying events occurred in my family.

The **thesis statement** comes at the end of the introductory paragraph. This sentence tells the reader that he/she can expect to read about the events that caused the author to stop smoking in the rest of the essay.

Location Another Example

Maya Angelou is an accomplished African-American author in the United States. While growing up, she suffered tremendous hardship. Some of her most difficult life events are portrayed in novels and poems such as, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and, *Still I Rise*. Her written works often include strong themes such as perseverance through trials, love for family, and passionate optimism.

The **thesis statement** comes at the end of the introductory paragraph. This sentence tells the reader that he/she can expect to read more about how Maya Angelou expresses these themes in her writing.

Key Features

States an Opinion or Attitude

Good thesis statements often express a writer's opinion or attitude on a particular topic. This makes the thesis statement more specific and requires the writer to explain or prove his/her opinion in the essay. Look at the examples below.

Key Features

States an Opinion or Attitude

I learned to play many musical instruments when I was young.

Learning to play many musical instruments when I was young helped me to become a more intelligent and well-rounded person.

This would not be considered a good thesis statement because it is only expressing a fact. It doesn't give the writer's opinion or attitude on playing musical instruments. This thesis statement doesn't give the writer very much to explain or prove in his/her essay.

This thesis statement is much better because it expresses how the writer feels about the experience of learning to play musical instruments. This thesis statement requires the writer to explain how and why playing a musical instrument made him/her a better person.

An Opinion or Attitude

Another Example

Cancun is a popular vacation spot in Mexico.

This would not be considered a good thesis statement, because it is only expressing a fact. It doesn't reflect the writer's opinion or attitude on Cancun. This thesis statement doesn't give the writer very much to explain or prove in his/her essay.

Cancun is one of the best vacation spots in Mexico because of its comfortable climate and proximity to some well-known archeological sites.

This thesis statement is much better because it expresses how the writer feels about Cancun. This thesis statement requires the writer to explain how and why going to Cancun is a good choice for visitors.

Key Features

Subtopics

You can make your thesis statement more specific by including subtopics or supporting ideas. By doing this, you give your reader a clear idea of what will follow in the body paragraphs of your essay.

Key Features Subtopics

The large influx of people to California has had major effects on the state.

No subtopics are named in this thesis statement.

subtopic #2

The large influx of people to California has had major effects on the ability of the state to provide housing, electricity, and jobs for all residents.

subtopic #1

subtopic #3

This statement names three subtopics.
Can you find all of the subtopics?

Subtopics Another Example

Inner-city public schools grapple with some serious problems.

No subtopics are named in this thesis statement.

subtopic #1

subtopic #2

Some of the most serious problems in today's inner-city public schools are the overcrowded classrooms, the low percentage of trained teachers, and the lack of resources such as textbooks for students.

subtopic #3

This statement names three subtopics.
Can you find all of the subtopics?

Key Features

Don't State the Obvious

In thesis statements, you should avoid using statements like, “This essay will discuss...” or “I’m going to write about...”. Try to write a thesis statement that captures your reader’s attention without announcing your main topic and stating the obvious. Look at the examples below.

Key Features

Don't State the Obvious

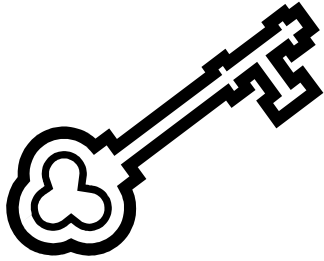
~~**In this essay, I am going to discuss**
the effects of long-term drug abuse.~~

**Long-term drug use can have
disastrous effects on one's marriage,
career, and health.**

Don't State the Obvious Another Example

~~**This essay will discuss some ways
teachers can fight teenage drug abuse.**~~

**Teachers can fight teenage drug
abuse by educating young people on its
dangers and by being good role models.**



Key Features Review

- ✓ **states the main idea of the essay in a complete sentence, not in a question.**
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