

**What is a thesis statement?**

A thesis statement is a sentence that captures the main idea of a paper. It is also meant to be the writer's supported point of view on the chosen topic, often initiating or inviting agreement or disagreement on the reader's part. **If it is not arguable, it is not a thesis statement.**

**Why do I need a thesis statement?**

- **For your personal sanity.** If you have created a solid thesis statement, it will help you pin-point your argument and determine what you need to include in your paper.
- **Your reader's sanity.** Your thesis will ground your reader and help them to understand your argument before they get lost in your paper.

**When do I need a thesis statement?**

Most papers, especially analytical, expository or explanatory, or argumentative papers will benefit from a thesis statement.

**Where does my thesis statement appear in my paper?**

A thesis statement should typically be the last sentence of your first paragraph (the introduction).

**How to write a thesis statement:****Weak examples:**

- *Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a great American novel.*  
This is a statement, and although it's somewhat arguable, there isn't a clear argument.
- *The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.*  
You don't have to answer every question in your thesis, but your thesis should give your paper direction beyond just stating the topic of your paper.

**Strong examples:**

- *Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.*  
This thesis statement gives specifics. It is a concrete argument. It defines how and why the novel is meaningful.
- *While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.*  
Now there are specific similarities to compare and contrast.