
Thesis Statements

Just as every house needs a strong foundation on which to build, so does every essay. That foundation or focus is usually summed up in one complete sentence. We call a statement which sums up the main idea of an entire piece of writing a **thesis statement**.

The following is a basic strategy which can be applied when you are trying to develop a good strong thesis statement.

1. Jot down on a piece of paper the overall topic you wish to talk about.
2. Narrow your topic if necessary.
3. Ask yourself, "What do I want my readers to know about my topic?" Jot that answer down.
4. Take the notes you jotted down and form one complete sentence.
5. Ask yourself, "What is the purpose of my essay? To inform? To persuade? To define? To evaluate?" Jot the answer down.
6. Adjust wording of your sentence to reflect your purpose.

Example:

If you are interested in the topic of medical experimentation on animals, for step #1 of the strategy you might jot down--medical experimentation on animals

With that step completed, you move on to step #2. Ask yourself, "What particular type of medical experimentation do I want to deal with? Research on diseases? Research on behavior? Research on consumer products?" After you question yourself, you must choose. That choice narrows your topic. Revise your topic to reflect the limitations you placed on it--behavioral research on animals

With a newly narrowed topic, proceed to step #3. Jot down things you wish to reveal to your readers about the topic. Procedures can cause unnecessary pain and suffering, results don't often guarantee a similar result in humans, are often needlessly repeated once results have been verified.

Now it's time to move on to step #4, putting it all together.

Behavioral research on animals can cause unnecessary pain and suffering to the animals, doesn't often guarantee a similar result in humans, and is often needlessly repeated once the results of the experiments have been verified.

Bingo! You have a dynamite thesis for a research paper!

Don't forget steps #5 & #6 though: what's your purpose? to inform? to persuade?

Informative statements deal with factual information and avoid emotionally charged descriptive words

Persuasive statements combine factual information with emotionally charged language in an attempt to get the reader to agree with the writer's point of view.

If our purpose is to persuade, the thesis statement we wrote in step #4 is fine because it contains emotionally charged language (i.e.. unnecessary, suffering, and needlessly)

If our purpose is to inform, we would need to eliminate the emotionally charged language to conform with our intent.

Also, remember...just as we needed to narrow our topic, we might also want to narrow the points we would like to relate to our readers if we are writing a short essay. For example, any one of the three points we covered in our research paper thesis statement could make a good thesis statement for a shorter essay.

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