

# Thesis Statements Deconstructed



*Thesis Statement* – A thesis is the roadmap for the paper, representing the path of your argument to the reader. It is a **direct statement** that explains the topic of your essay, what you believe about that topic, and why you believe it. It is **most often placed at the end of the introductory paragraph**.

## WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

- A thesis lets the reader know what to expect or look for in the essay.
- A thesis helps you narrow down a more general topic, find your own angle, and express your opinion.

## WHAT DOES IT CONSIST OF?

A thesis statement is made up of three different parts that are then formed into a **complete arguable sentence**:

- Identification (What is the topic you are talking about?)
- Claim (What do you believe or what message you are trying to get across about the topic?)
- Support (What details will support or flesh out your claim?)

**Example:** The drinking age (*topic*) should be lowered to 18 (*claim*) because at that age, people already get other adult responsibilities, including the right to vote (1), ability to join the armed forces (2), and potential to go to jail (3).

## WHAT DO EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENTS LOOK LIKE?

- *avoid merely announcing the topic.*

**Too much statement:** In this paper, I will discuss the relationship between fairy tales and early childhood.

**Revised:** Not just empty stories for kids, fairy tales shed light on the psychology of young children.

- *be an argument, not a fact.*

**Too Factual:** The first polygraph was developed by Dr. John A. Larson in 1921.

**Revised:** Because the polygraph has not been proved reliable, its use by private employers should be banned.

- *be sharply focused, not too vague or general*

**Too Vague:** Many of the hip-hop songs are disgusting.

**Revised:** Many hip-hop songs are sexist because they objectify women, focus on their body parts, and reduce their role in society to a sexual one.

- *when possible, use an "although . . . actually" format.*

This format gives readers something new to consider. It is an efficient way to present the **counterargument** to your claim, admitting that another side to the issue exists.

**Example:** *Although* many people believe that extraterrestrials and crop circles are a figment of the imagination, *actually* there is strong evidence that alien encounters are real.

**Note:** "actually" isn't always necessary. It is often implied with the clause "although."

## HOW DO YOU CONSTRUCT A THESIS FOR A NARRATIVE ESSAY?

Even though a narrative essay tells a story, and therefore isn't always making a claim that can be proven with clear cut reasons, the story should still always have a point. This point should be expressed in the thesis statement, which could offer a lesson learned, set the scene, or identify a theme.

**Examples:** If you are writing a narrative about a great one-day trip you took with friends, the thesis could be: Spending time with close friends gives memories that can last forever, even if the trip is just one day.

**OR,** a thesis for an essay about how you responded to peer pressure could be:

The night I got caught driving without a license, I learned that I shouldn't do whatever my friends wanted me to do.

## PERSUASIVE/ARGUMENTATIVE PRACTICE:

**Writing Prompt:** Educators often discuss whether high school sports have a positive influence on students. Some educators think they do because the lessons learned from athletic competition add to the lessons learned in the classroom. Others think high school sports do not because the emphasis on sports often overshadows student achievement in other areas. In your opinion, do high school sports have a positive influence on students?

ID-Identify topic	Claim-What you believe	Direction-3 general reasons you believe your claim is true
<i>Participation in high school sports</i>	<i>Should be required for everyone</i>	<i>It creates school spirit, provides exercise, and encourages team work</i>
<b>Sample Thesis:</b> <i>High school students should be required to participate in school sponsored sports because it creates school spirit, provides exercise, and encourages team work.</i>		

## NARRATIVE PRACTICE:

**Writing Prompt:** One of the hardest things I've ever had to do was learn how to swim. I was always afraid of the water, but I decided that swimming was an important skill that I should learn. I also thought it would be good exercise and help me to become physically stronger.

ID-Identify topic	Claim-Lesson learned or theme to be developed	Direction-The message which needs to be delivered or the real reason you are sharing this story
<i>Swimming lessons</i>	<i>Were very challenging for me but worth the effort</i>	<i>They would help me overcome my fear while also providing necessary skills and useful exercise</i>
<b>Sample Thesis:</b> <i>Although taking swimming lessons was one of the most challenging parts of my childhood, it provided me with useful skills and good habits that will last a lifetime</i>		

## YOUR PAPER:

ID-Identify topic	Claim- What you believe, lesson learned or theme to be developed	Direction- 3 reasons that support your claim or the message being delivered or the real reason you are sharing this story
<b>Thesis:</b>		

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