



The Catholic University of America
Writing Center Handout

The Thesis Statement

What is a thesis statement?

The thesis statement is the sentence (or two) that states the main point of your paper- **the point that every other word of the paper is aimed at supporting/proving/explaining.**

Why do I need one?

You need a thesis statement because you need to make a point when you're arguing, explaining, or describing anything. Without a thesis statement, a paper is literally pointless; you do not know what you are talking about and neither does your reader. You cannot organize the argument or details of your paper to develop a main point without a clearly stated main point.

How do I write a thesis if I have already written a paper without one?

Often, we start writing a draft with only a general or uncertain idea of what we want to say. Only after writing the draft do we realize the real point we are making and how we want to say it. This is a normal and legitimate use of a rough draft, but the writer must then construct a solid thesis statement near the front of the paper to help readers understand the text.

Two ways to find a thesis in a paper:

- ***READ ABOUT IT*** - Look through your paper to discern a main idea implied in the points you make. Look at the main argument of each paragraph; perhaps jot them down in a list. ***Hint:*** The concluding paragraph is often a great place to find a thesis, because it tends to summarize the points actually written in the middle paragraphs and to connect them.
- ***TALK ABOUT IT*** - Many people freeze up communicating on paper but relax when talking about their ideas. Try talking with a friend, your teacher, or a Writing Center staff member about your ideas. Ask if they are willing to take notes for you while you talk or have them summarize

what you have said so you can write it down in your own words.

A Thesis is NOT:

- ***A Topic***

TOPIC: I will write about the effects of water on people.

THESIS: Water in moderate quantities is essential to numerous systems inside the human body as well as to the proper maintenance of the skin, although excessive amounts can result in suffocation.

- ***A Question***

QUESTION: Ultimately, the issue is, should the Assyrians have invaded Australia?

THESIS: Despite the potential economic and public relations benefits of the move, the Assyrians ultimately should not have invaded Australia due to the logistical and moral problems involved.

- ***A Relationship-Defining Talk***

RDT: There are many contrasts between Plato and Marx's concept of justice.

THESIS: Plato and Marx basically disagree on where justice originates and what its final end is, and these disagreements indicate a more fundamental divide over the spiritual nature of man and his meaning as an individual within a community.

For further information, please use the following link via Purdue OWL:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html