

Writing Formally

Thesis Statements and Beyond

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Thesis statements act as the skeleton of your writing. Consider a thesis statement as the bone structure to hold up your writing, to provide structure and the ability to stand up. It is a road map to show the reader where you are going and how you are going to get there.

Enough with the metaphors. Let's look at some examples:

Poor thesis:

Technology is everywhere today.
Modern America uses technology in many different ways.

Getting better:

There are problems in the current technology that we use.

Good thesis:

Technology in the 21st century is impeding progress by limiting job opportunities, moving students away from traditional books, and adding to the entertainment obsession.

Poor thesis:

Martin Luther King, JR. was a civil rights leader.

Getting better:

Martin Luther King, JR. changed the civil rights movement.

Good thesis:

Martin Luther King, JR. gave the modern-day African-American movement life by bringing the issue to popular attention, becoming a respectable figurehead, and by incorporating religion into a social message.

Poor thesis:

People are crazy to ban books in schools.

Getting better:

Schools should keep *Huckleberry Finn* in schools because it teaches kids a lot.

Good thesis:

Huckleberry Finn is a novel that must remain in schools because it offers a realistic picture of 19th century life in the South with its portrayal of slavery, dialect, and poverty.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Per: _____

A Generic Structure for Your Papers
(Whether History, English, or Health class)

I. Introduction

- Include a hooking statement to draw your audience into your subject (Do NOT begin your paper with a question or a definition. These have been done too much by young writers).
- This paragraph will give your reader necessary background to your topic.
- Start off general, then narrow as you continue in this paragraph(s).
- End the paragraph with your thesis statement. (**For the purposes of this assignment, put your entire thesis statement in bold text**)
- After your introduction, the reader will understand your topic along with exactly what you are setting out to prove, display, showcase in this paper.

II. First main point

- Begin with a transitional statement ("As we begin to explore..." or "The first example of...is" or "America has not always been as wealthy as it is today.")
- Move into explaining how this point supports what you are showing in your thesis
- Support 1 _____
- Support 2 _____
- Support 3 _____
- Here you are giving solid examples, quotations, and logical connections that help further your thesis
- By the end of this main point, the reader will clearly see how your first point adds to proving your thesis

III. Second main point

- Begin with a transitional statement ("The second example of...is" or "Not only is America____, it is also...")
- Move into explaining how this point supports what you are showing in your thesis
- Support 1 _____
- Support 2 _____
- Support 3 _____
- Here you are giving solid examples, quotations, and logical connections that help further your thesis

- By the end of this main point, the reader will clearly see how your second point adds to proving your thesis

IV. Third main point

- Begin with a transitional statement ("The final example of...is" or "However, not all is hopeless for the new country")
- Move into explaining how this point supports what you are showing in your thesis
- Support 1 _____
- Support 2 _____
- Support 3 _____
- Here you are giving solid examples, quotations, and logical connections that help further your thesis
- By the end of this main point, the reader will clearly see how your third point adds to proving your thesis

V. Conclusion

- Link together the strengths of your argument
- Restate your thesis in a clever way. Do not simply copy exactly
- Leave the reader a final thought that will bring a sense of closure to this piece.
- The reader should feel that it is completed. If the reader turns to see if there is another page, you haven't done your job properly.

Words and Phrases to Avoid in Formal Writing:

- I, Me, my, mine
- You
- Basically
- A lot
- Clichés that you would say to your friends
- If you think about it

Above all, bring something new and interesting to the educated community. If this sounds like an encyclopedia entry, you need to find a way to put your own voice and power into your creation.

Body (develop 3-4 supporting paragraphs that remain focused on your thesis)

Paragraph #1

Topic Sentence (your claim):

Support (from the text):

Explanatory sentence(s) (your "how" and/or "why"):

Transitions that would help make logical connections:

Paragraph #2

Topic Sentence (your claim):

Support (from the text):

Explanatory sentence(s) (your "how" and/or "why"):

Transitions that would help make logical connections:

Paragraph #3

Topic Sentence (your claim):

Support (from the text):

Explanatory sentence(s) (your "how" and/or "why"):

Transitions that would help make logical connections:

Paragraph #4

Topic Sentence (your claim):

Support (from the text):

Explanatory sentence(s) (your “how” and/or “why”):

Transitions that would help make logical connections:

Conclusion

The purpose of the conclusion is to bring the essay to a **satisfactory** ending. You don't want to introduce new *ideas* in the conclusion, but you can extend the thinking into the realm of personal reflection (your thinking about the “so what?” question). *If*, through the writing of your essay, you have formulated new *insights*, this is your chance to insert them and to shine. But don't you dare summarize! Avoid the urge to simply restate your body paragraph topics—this promotes your reader to say “Duh.” Remember that this is the last bit of your writing that the reader gets—**go out with a bang, not a whimper.**

A good conclusion needs a good transition sentence. Do not use *In conclusion!*
