

## Writing Formally

### Thesis Statements and Beyond

Mr. Coia

**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:

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**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 21<sup>st</sup> century is impeding progress by limiting job opportunities, moving students away from traditional books, and adding to the entertainment obsession.

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**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.

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**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 19<sup>th</sup> century life in the South with its portrayal of slavery, dialect, and poverty.

## **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!).
- 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

Thanks, Mrs. Crowe, for your outline

#### **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**.