

Thesis Statement FAQ: Everything You Have Always Wanted to Know (But Were Afraid to Ask)

What is a thesis statement, anyway?

Traditionally, it is the last sentence or last few sentences of your introduction. Its purpose is to tell your reader what your essay's argument or claim and main points are going to be. The rest of your essay will prove your thesis statement with detailed evidence.

Do I really need a thesis statement?

If you are writing an argumentative, persuasive, or analytical essay, then YES—always. However, some types of writing assignments, like lab reports, do not require a thesis statement. If you are not sure, ask your professor.

What does a thesis statement look like?

Let's say you have done some research on Batman and decided that he is actually a bad guy. Your thesis statement should contain three elements:

<i>Element</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
Your SUBJECT/TOPIC	What your paper is about	Batman
Your ARGUMENT/CLAIM	What you want to persuade your reader to believe	Batman is a bad guy
Your REASONING/EVIDENCE	Your main points, which the rest of your essay will explain in detail	1. Basically a violent cop 2. Mean to his butler 3. Greedy billionaire

In this case, your thesis statement might look a little something like this:

Batman is a villain because he supports police violence, abuses his employees, and does not pay taxes.
Make sure your points appear in the order in which you will discuss them in your essay.

What if I haven't figured out all my points yet?

That's okay! It's normal for your thesis statement to evolve as you work on your paper. For your first draft, you might start with a very simple thesis:

Batman is a villain.

As your essay takes shape, don't forget to return to your thesis statement and revise it to match what you have written.

Is it okay to change my entire thesis statement as I go along?

Yes! Changing your mind is a healthy part of the writing process. After a lot of research and reflection, you might end up in a very different place than where you started:
Catwoman, not Batman, is the true hero of Gotham City: she is an advocate for women's rights, fights income inequality, and protects those who cannot defend themselves.

Are thesis statements always so simple?

Not at all! Thesis statements can be quite sophisticated. If you feel comfortable with the basics, maybe you are ready to take your thesis statement to the next level. Here are some ways to do that:

Most people think of Batman as a hero. In fact, contrary to popular belief, Batman is a villain because he supports police violence, abuses his employees, and does not pay taxes.

Though he is not as cruel or as violent as the Joker, Batman is not a hero but a more subtle kind of villain; he supports police violence, abuses his employees, and does not pay taxes.

Batman is considered a hero because he never kills people, but heroism means more than simply refraining from murder. A real hero would never support police violence, abuse his employees, or cheat on his taxes. Batman, who is guilty of all three, is more a villain than a hero.



Surprise your reader by disagreeing with what most people believe.



Specify that your claim is true only in a certain way.



Present an opposing viewpoint, then contradict it with your thesis statement.

That looks like fun! Can I try?

Sure! If you need help getting started, take a look at the Thesis Statement Mad Libs below, and fill in the blanks.

Some may argue that _____; *Opposing viewpoint*

however _____ *Your argument*

It is widely known that _____, *Widely known thing*

but not many people realize that _____ *Your argument*

It might appear at first glance that _____, *Misconception*

but in fact, _____ *Your argument*