

Writing a Strong Thesis Statement

What is a thesis?

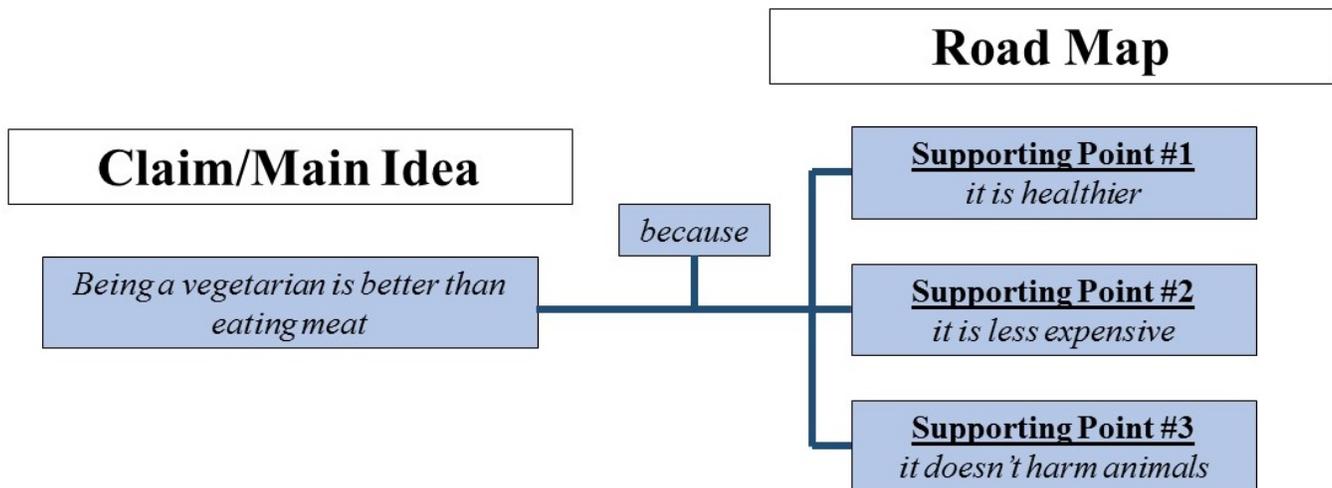
- The thesis is a statement (usually a single sentence) that expresses the central idea or main argument of the essay and reflects the writer's purpose for writing it.
- It typically appears at the end of the introduction as the last sentence (though it may appear elsewhere).
- The thesis may be implied or explicitly stated, but it should always be evident to the reader.
- The thesis may differ in form depending on the type of writing (argumentative, persuasive, informative, narrative, etc.).
- The thesis should be restated in a new and interesting way in the conclusion.

Explicit vs. Implied

- An **explicit thesis** directly states the writer's main idea/position and provides a clear direction for the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *The most significant problems facing Africa are poverty, political corruption, and poor healthcare.*
- An **implied thesis** is not directly stated, but rather suggested through the writer's ideas and supporting points. Nonetheless, it should still provide an obvious focus for the reader.
 - ✓ **Example:** *There are several serious problems facing Africa today that require attention.*

Parts of a thesis (claim + road map):

- **Claim or main idea:** This part states the main idea of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *Being a vegetarian is better than eating meat...*
- **Road map:** This part lists the major supporting reason(s) discussed in the body of the essay. Note that not all instructors require this part; always consult your professor's instructions.
 - ✓ **Example:** *... because it is healthier, less expensive, and doesn't harm animals.*
- **Claim + Road Map = Entire Thesis Statement**
 - ✓ **Example:** *Being a vegetarian is better than eating meat because it is healthier, less expensive, and doesn't harm animals.*



Things to Avoid

- **Don't announce your thesis:** *In this essay, I am going to tell you about vegetarianism and why everyone should adopt this lifestyle.*
 - ✓ **Note:** Some instructors may, however, encourage this type of first-person statement; always refer to your professor's instructions.
- **Don't confuse your readers:** The thesis should be clear and focus on **ONE** main idea.
- **Don't write the thesis as a fact:** This doesn't allow the writer to develop their ideas or prove anything because the statement is already factual and does not require additional explanation.
- **Don't write the thesis as a question:** This allows readers, rather than the writer, to determine the meaning of the essay. For example, *Don't you think eating meat is inhumane?* may be more effectively restated as *Eating meat is inhumane because . . .*

Types of Thesis Statements

The purpose and form of a thesis may depend on the genre of writing.

Argumentative Thesis

- The argumentative thesis takes a clear position on a debatable issue/topic and suggests or states the supporting reason(s) for that stance, which will be discussed further in the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *A vegetarian diet is better than a diet that includes meat because a vegetarian diet is healthier, less expensive, and more humane toward animals.*

Try your own argumentative thesis:

CLAIM

_____ because

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Persuasive/Proposal Thesis

- The persuasive thesis takes a clear position on a debatable issue/topic, attempting to persuade a specific audience to enact some sort of change, and suggests or states the supporting reason(s) for that stance, which will be discussed further in the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *We, as a society, should require a parenting license for new parents because it will reduce infant mortality rates, improve children's health, and create better citizens.*

Try your own persuasive thesis:

AUDIENCE

SUGGESTED CHANGE

ROAD MAP

_____ should _____ because

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Informative/Expository Thesis

- The informative thesis introduces the subject or topic that the essay will define, explain, and inform the reader about and suggests or states the specific elements to be discussed in the body of the essay. Note that informative writing does not contain the writer’s opinion and should not attempt to form an argument or persuade readers.
 - ✓ **Example:** *To fully understand hip-hop culture, it is important to consider its origins in break dancing, deejaying, and emceeing.*

Try your own informative thesis:

SUBJECT

_____ can be understood by considering

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Compare/Contrast Thesis

- The compare/contrast thesis introduces two or more subjects to be compared and contrasted in the body of the essay and suggests or states the specific points upon which they will be compared.
 - ✓ **Example:** *The similarities and differences between Democrats and Republicans can be seen by comparing their economic approaches, their domestic concerns, and their foreign affairs policies.*

Try your own compare/contrast thesis:

SUBJECT #1

SUBJECT #2

ROAD MAP

_____ and _____ can be compared based on

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Common Ground Thesis

- The common ground thesis introduces two opposing viewpoints, indicating that, despite their obvious disagreement, there is common ground or shared values upon which they can agree and also states or suggests the specific points of disagreement/agreement to be discussed in the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *Although Democrats and Republicans disagree about many things, they do share the common values of strengthening the economy, protecting human rights, and improving the education system.*

Try your own common ground thesis:

MAIN DISAGREEMENT

Although X and Y disagree about _____, they do agree about _____

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Process Thesis

- The process thesis introduces a particular process and suggests or states the specific steps/parts of the process that will be discussed, in detail, throughout the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *There are four important steps in the process of writing an essay, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.*

Try your own process thesis:

PROCESS

The three important steps to the process of _____ are _____

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Narrative/Significant Event Thesis

- The narrative thesis introduces the subject or topic of the narrative and emphasizes the overall significance of the events described in the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *The day that my first child was born was a significant event in my life because it drastically changed my perspective on personal responsibility.*

Try your own narrative thesis:

EVENT

_____ was a significant event because _____

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Cause and Effect Thesis

- The cause/effect thesis identifies one cause and suggests or states what the resulting effects are **OR** identifies one effect and suggests or states the multiple causes of that effect.
 - ✓ **Example 1:** *Global warming has a number of negative effects, including increased natural disasters, agricultural losses, and the extinction of species.*
 - ✓ **Example 2:** *Global warming is the result of three causes, including pollution from fossil fuels, deforestation, and the use of too much hairspray during the 1980s.*

Try your own cause and effect thesis:

CAUSE

_____ has a number of resulting effects
including

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

OR

EFFECT

_____ is the result of three causes
including

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Illustration/Definition/Concept Thesis

- The illustration thesis introduces a concept that requires further definition/explanation/illustration and suggests or states the various aspects of the concept to be discussed throughout the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *The concept of love can be illustrated by examining its three different types, including familial love, platonic love, and romantic love.*

Try your own illustration thesis:

CONCEPT

The concept of _____ can be illustrated by

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Profile/Description Thesis

- The descriptive thesis introduces a subject (person, place, object, etc.) and the writer’s dominant impression of it, and then suggests or states the specific characteristics of that subject, which will be discussed throughout the body of the essay in order to demonstrate this dominant impression.
 - ✓ **Example 1:** *The most defining characteristics of the Writing Center include its physical design, the types of people who use it, and the friendly atmosphere.*
 - ✓ **Example 2:** *Martin Luther King Jr. can best be described as inspirational because of his peaceful ideals, his kind personality, and his contributions to human and civil rights.*

Try your own descriptive thesis:

SUBJECT

The most defining characteristics of _____ include

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

OR

SUBJECT DOMINANT IMPRESSION

_____ can best be described as _____ because

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Problem-Solution/Proposal Thesis

- The proposal thesis introduces a problem and proposes a possible solution, suggesting or stating the specific parts of the solution to be discussed further in the body of the essay.
 - ✓ **Example:** *An effective solution to the problem of global warming will involve the development of alternative fuel sources, replanting deforested areas, and limiting individual energy consumption.*

Try your own proposal thesis:

PROBLEM

An effective solution to the problem of _____ will involve

ROAD MAP

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Evaluative Thesis

- The evaluative thesis introduces one or more subjects to be evaluated, makes an evaluative judgment about the subject(s), and suggests or states the specific criteria upon which it/they will be thoroughly evaluated throughout the body of the essay. Note that an evaluative essay can focus on either positive or negative aspects, or it can include both.
 - ✓ **Example 1:** *Crash is an excellent movie because of the realistic acting, the provocative subject matter, and the great character development.*
 - ✓ **Example 2:** *Although Crash has very poor plot development, it is an effective film overall because of its realistic acting and great character development.*

Try your own evaluative thesis:

SUBJECT

EVALUATION

ROAD MAP

_____ is _____ because

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

OR

SUBJECT

NEGATIVE ASPECT

ROAD MAP

Although _____ is bad because of _____, it's good because

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Rhetorical Analysis Thesis

- The rhetorical analysis thesis introduces a text (book, film, advertisement, etc.) and makes an evaluative judgment about the effectiveness of the author's use of rhetorical appeals (*ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*) to persuade the readers of his/her claim.
 - ✓ **Example:** *Dr. Seuss effectively convinces readers that green eggs and ham are delicious through his skilled use of pathos.*

Try your own rhetorical analysis thesis:

EVALUATION

ROAD MAP

The author effectively/ineffectively convinces the audience of _____ through his/her rhetorical use of

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Note: Instead of the generic terms (*ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*), some professors may prefer specific examples of these appeals such as personal experience, humor, facts, etc.

Note

These are only basic examples of thesis statements. Writers are encouraged to experiment with these structures in order to develop a thesis statement that best suits their particular piece of writing.