

Student Name _____

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Date Completed _____



Creating Dynamic Thesis Statements

Directions: Complete exercises 1-3 **and** thesis statement practices #1-3. Review your completed DLA with a tutor.

EXERCISE 1 - What are three things you know about thesis statements?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

WHAT IS IT?

The basic point or main idea of the whole essay is its thesis. A thesis is often an assertion that you argue or support in the essay. Having a thesis is useful to both the writer and the reader as it links the main ideas of the essay and explains the writer's opinion on those ideas. If you have problems with your thesis, try to follow these two conventions:

1. A thesis statement is often (but not always) one sentence and is most often placed in the introductory paragraph.
2. A thesis statement is an arguable assertion that can be proven with evidence and opinions.

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

- A thesis helps you narrow down the more general topic and find your own angle on the topic and express your opinion.
- A thesis lets the reader know what to expect or look for in the essay.
- A well-formed thesis helps you develop and cover all parts of an assignment, helps you know when you are "done," and keeps you organized, helping you determine if you are wandering off in unrelated directions.

WHAT DO EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENTS LOOK LIKE?

An Effective Thesis: An effective thesis should be an argument, not a fact; it should be limited, not too broad; and it should be sharply focused, not too vague.

Too Factual: The first polygraph was developed by Dr. John A. Larson in 1921.

Revised: Because the polygraph has not been proved reliable, even under controlled conditions, its use by private employers should be banned.

Hint: If it sounds like a Wikipedia or Encyclopedia entry, it is too factual.

Too Broad: Being overly materialistic will cause many problems.

Revised: Being overly materialistic will cause many problems because you lose sight of what matters to you.

Too Vague: Many of the hip-hop songs are disgusting.

Revised: Many hip-hop songs are sexist because they make women look like pretty pictures with no substance.

HOW DO I CREATE A THESIS STATEMENT?

There are many approaches... here are some methods:

- **Answer the question or respond to the writing task directly:** One way to create a thesis statement is to directly answer the assigned question or if the writing assignment is not in the form of a question, then by responding to the task. When responding to a writing assignment, be sure that you have responded directly to what is being asked. Make sure that you address all parts of the assignment.
- **Brainstorm and freewrite to discover your argument:** If there is no specific writing assignment, begin by brainstorming (listing keywords and concepts) and freewriting (writing informally) on your topic. See what emerges as to what specific aspects interest you. State your opinion on one of these aspects and examine the significance. Why is this important? What are the implications?
- **Connect your ideas under one joining sentence:** If you have done some brainstorming, freewriting, outlining or drafting of the paper, and have many ideas but not a thesis yet, look at your main ideas or main supporting points. What do these ideas have in common? What overall argument connects those ideas? What do all the topic sentences suggest? Answer this to create a thesis.

WHERE DO I PUT IT?

DO: Academic and business writing uses the thesis as a power play, letting the reader know what the writer has set out to do, so as the reader reads, he or she will think, "Wow, this writer sure has good insight and support for her argument." In this kind of writing, the thesis appears in the introduction or very soon after.

DON'T: Some writers have the thesis at the end of the essay on purpose, thinking that if they save the main point until the end of the essay, the reader is forced to read the entire essay to discover the main point. While it's true that this happens in a lot of narratives (stories) and fiction, this is rarely the most effective place for the thesis in expository writing.

EXERCISE 2 - Thesis Check-In Quiz:

1. True/False: A thesis should be a fact. _____
2. What is one way to come up with a thesis? _____
3. Where in an essay does your thesis go? _____

EXERCISE 3 - YOUR QUESTION:

Directions:

- Write down one question you still have about thesis statements.
 - Check in with a tutor to get your question answered and find out how you did on the quiz.
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Thesis Statements Practice #1:

Practice Finding Opinion Words

Thesis: As you explore your subject, you will begin to see possible ways to connect your ideas. A sentence that links all your main ideas and explains your opinion on those ideas is called a *thesis statement*. Generally, you will want to put your thesis in the opening paragraph of your essay.

Opinion: A thesis should contain a topic (*what* you are writing about), an opinion about the topic (what your *attitude* is toward the topic), and reasons why you hold that view (explanations answering “*why?*” or “*so what?*”). In other words, a thesis needs to be an arguable assertion that can be proven with facts and opinions. To check to see if a thesis is arguable, locate the opinion words.

Locating the Opinion in a Thesis: When you look for the opinion in a thesis, ask yourself what the writer’s attitude is towards the topic.

For example, in the sentence: “Many hip-hop songs are sexist because they make women look like pretty pictures with no substance.”

In the thesis, the topic is “hip-hop songs” and the controlling idea is that these songs are “sexist”

Another person might have had a different attitude and may have found the hip-hop songs “empowering to women”.

Therefore, “sexist” reveals the writer’s attitude and also indicates what the essay with this thesis statement will be focused on: demonstrating why hip-hop songs are “sexist.” This thesis statement limits the writer’s focus and clearly tells the reader what the essay will be about. **Type in the opinion words below; if there are no opinion words, it is not a thesis:**

1) In this essay I will discuss abortion.

opinion word(s):

2) Television is destroying the unity of the modern family.

opinion word(s):

3) In her essay, Erlich shows that there is a balance of community and isolation in her hometown.

opinion word(s):

4) While text messaging can be a handy way to stay in touch with friends and family, many people text compulsively causing them to be distracted.

opinion word(s):

5) Similar to Andrew Lamb's experience in *Trash*, my uncle has taught me the best lesson about the importance of putting family first.

opinion word(s):

Thesis Statements Practice #2:

Developing Thesis Statements in Response to Questions

You will frequently need to formulate your thesis statements in response to questions provided by your instructors. The following questions or statements are designed to give you practice in developing such thesis statements.

Example: Question: What well known person do you admire?

Answer: Barbara Lee should be commended for embracing her responsibilities as a US representative, particularly when she would not grant the relatively inexperienced President George Bush full power in declaring war.

Exercise: Answer the following questions and create strong thesis statements.

1) How do you account for the rise of sports figures as superstars?

2) What arguments are there for or against single parenting?

3) What does it mean to be poor?

4) Should racial profiling be legalized? Why or why not?

5) What place has television in your life?

6) Is there more or less racism in America now than there was twenty years ago?

7) If you could live at an age other than your own, which would it be and why?

Thesis Statements Practice #3:

Creating Your Own Argument (Thesis) on a Topic

Exercise: Brainstorm various issues and ideas connected with your topic:

Creating a thesis: Remember: every thesis and topic sentence must contain not only a topic but also opinion words that tell us the attitude of the writer toward the topic.

(1) Form questions using words from the brainstorm (use the journalists' questions:

who, what, how, why, where, when)

(2) Create a thesis; **answer** the questions (seek opinions that need to be proven not unarguable facts)

(3) Deepen the thesis by asking "so what"? Why should we be concerned? How is this important? What can be learned from this?

Practice in creating a thesis:

(1) Create *questions* using words from the brainstorm:

(2) *Answer* your best questions:

(3) *Deepen* several of your answers to #2; take them a step further by asking "so what"? Why should we be concerned? How is this important?
