



WRITING CENTER QUICK REFERENCE THESIS STATEMENTS

WHAT IS A THESIS?

Your **thesis statement** asserts the central idea of your writing. The thesis takes a clear-cut position on a debatable topic, or summarizes the main point of argument of your paper. The thesis answers the main question or problem associated with your topic, which your course's assignment directions often state.

WHY SHOULD I WRITE A THESIS?

Think of a thesis as the starting point on a map. If you don't have starting point, then it is difficult to plan your route and reach your destination (your conclusion). The thesis provides a roadmap that lets your readers know where your ideas are headed. Furthermore, it engages them and makes them think about your topic from the start.

A well-written thesis will help you create a clear, concise paper with a strong argument. When writing persuasively, you need to know what you want to prove or your essay will lack focus. The smaller points that form your detailed argument should flow from your thesis.

SAMPLE: ARGUMENT THESIS STATEMENT

In an American academic essay, such as an argument or analysis piece, the thesis can be found in the introductory paragraph. Often it is a sentence or two at the end of the introduction. (Other non-Western cultures may place the thesis elsewhere, such as at the end of the essay). "Performance Enhancement Through Biotechnology Has No Place in Sports." Hammond. From *A Writer's Reference, 7th Edition*, ed. by Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers.

Athletes who use any type of biotechnology give themselves an unfair advantage and disrupt the sense of fair play, and they should be banned from competition.

TESTING YOUR THESIS

It is important to test your thesis in order to make sure it answers the appropriate questions and arguments. Here are some sample questions to evaluate a thesis:

- Does your thesis answer a question, propose a solution to a problem, or take a position in a debate?
- Does the thesis require an essay's worth of development? Or will you run out of points too quickly?
- Is the thesis too obvious? If you cannot come up with interpretations that oppose your own, consider revising your thesis.
- Can you support your thesis with the evidence available?

- Can you explain why readers will want to read an essay with this thesis? Can you respond when a reader asked “so what?”

SAMPLE: ANALYSIS THESIS IN AN INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

In her essay “Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street,” Betsy Taylor focuses not on the economic effects of large chain stores but on the effects these stores have on the “soul” of America. She argues that stores like Home Depot, Target, and Wal-Mart are bad for America because they draw people out of downtown shopping districts and cause them to focus on consumption... But Taylor’s argument is unconvincing because it focuses on sentimentality — on idealized images of a quaint Main Street — rather than on the roles that businesses play in consumers’ lives and communities. *By ignoring the complex economic relationship between large chain stores and their communities, Taylor incorrectly assumes that simply getting rid of big-box stores would have a positive effect on America’s communities.*

“Rethinking Big Box Stores.” Sanchez. From *A Writer’s Reference, 7th Edition*, ed. by Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers, p. 75.

SAMPLE: THESIS IN FEATURE WRITING

In feature writing, the thesis states the main point or trend that will be reported on. It is not always in the first paragraph and may be preceded by an anecdote that helps set the scene.

Mr. Muhammad and his followers had been killed by the C.I.A... In a secret deal, the C.I.A. had agreed to kill him in exchange for access to airspace it had long sought so it could use drones to hunt down its own enemies. *That back-room bargain, described in detail for the first time in interviews with more than a dozen officials in Pakistan and the United States, is critical to understanding the origins of a covert drone war that began under the Bush administration and expanded by President Obama, and is now the subject of fierce debate.* The deal, a month after a blistering internal report about abuses in the C.I.A.’s network of secret prisons, paved the way for the C.I.A. to change its focus from capturing terrorists to killing them...

“Rise of the Predators: A Secret Deal on Drones, Sealed in Blood” by Mark Mazzetti. From the *New York Times*, April 6, 2013.

SAMPLE: THESIS IN A PROFILE

In a profile, the thesis is often referred to as a **nutgraf**. The nutgraf is a summary point of what the reporter learned from the individual being interviewed. It is often found a few paragraphs into the piece, after the reporter has created a scene for where the interview is taking place and provided a brief background of the individual being interviewed.

When television audiences hear the word “showrunner,” they often assume that that person is responsible for the majority of the creative decisions on a show. But there is a carousel of professionals involved in any production — there are the writers, the directors, the executive producer, and the stars. [Pamela] Adlon spins all these plates at once. She has evangelized to other show runners the importance of directing. Issa Rae, the creator and star of “Insecure,” wrote me in an e-mail, “She’s always exhausted and claims it’s worth it, but I don’t want that life. She’s great at it and loves to challenge herself more and more each season.” Rae added, “No thanks.”

Felicia Fasano, the show's casting director, has known Adlon for almost fourteen years, but after reading the script of the "Better Things" pilot she called Adlon to apologize: "I'm so sorry for all those times I've made you have dinner with me! Oh, my God, I forget how busy you are."

"Raw Material." Interview and Feature by Carrie Batten. From *The New Yorker*, Feb. 11, 2019.

SAMPLE: IN A FILM REVIEW

In a film review, the thesis provides a summation of the author's thoughts on the movie. It should give the reader a general idea of what to expect from that movie, as well as including the author's own critical opinion.

These days, when most Hollywood types want to get political, they write checks or talk to empty chairs. But back in 1980, makeup artist John Chambers and a special-effects colleague went above and beyond, assisting the CIA to invent a phony film production as a front for a daring hostage rescue in Iran. *Declassified after 18 years, "Argo" is the gripping story of how Hollywood helped save the day. White-knuckle intense and less self-congratulatory than it sounds, Ben Affleck's unexpectedly comedic third feature has the vital elements to delight adult [audiences], judging by the enthusiastic response to this Oct. 12 releases's Telluride sneak [preview].*

"Argo" review by Peter Debruge. From *Variety*, August 31, 2012.