



## Thesis Statements

### The Backbone of a Good Essay

A good thesis statement defines the purpose of an essay and unifies a writer's thoughts by making a single claim about the topic. A thesis for an argumentative essay will answer the "so what?" question and motivate the intended audience to read the paper.

### Developing a Thesis Statement

**Starting out.** A writer often begins a paper with just a topic in mind. The first step is to devise a working thesis, which should be a complete sentence and include two parts:

1. **A Subject:** "In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain..."
2. **A Claim About the Subject:** "...fails to develop Jim as a key dynamic character."

**Modification.** Throughout the drafting process, a writer will revise the working thesis to respond to specific proof found through the research process. The working thesis may also need to be focused to keep the subject manageable within the page limit of the assignment:

1. **Working Thesis:** "In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain fails to develop Jim as a key dynamic character."
2. **Modified Thesis:** "Ironically, although key to Huck's seeing beyond racism, Jim's character continues to replicate racial stereotypes."

**Placement.** Introduce your thesis statement at the end of your introduction to establish your paper's purpose for readers and provide a natural transition into the body of the paper. In addition, the topic sentence in each paragraph should link directly back to the claim in the thesis. Finally, reaffirm your thesis statement at the end of your paper to create a sound, coherent finish.

### Thesis Statement Checklist

#### Content:

- ✓ Does my thesis statement address my original assignment?
- ✓ Does my thesis statement clearly communicate my paper's main idea?
- ✓ Have I indicated my major points and presented them in the order they appear in the paper?
- ✓ Do I save my strongest point for last in both my thesis statement and the body of my paper?
- ✓ Is there any idea in my thesis not addressed in my paper?

#### Style:

- ✓ Have I used straightforward and precise wording?
- ✓ Have I covered the entire statement within one concise sentence?
- ✓ Is the thesis statement free of opinion-based expressions (*I think, It seems,*) that may imply my paper is based on personal beliefs rather than a researched examination of the subject?
- ✓ Have I presented my argument in a way that engages my intended audience?

Once you have finished your paper, carefully review your thesis to be sure it still fits your proof. Writers often find their real thesis after finishing the paper body. Regularly revisiting your thesis throughout the drafting process makes fine-tuning at the end much easier.

