

Crafting a thesis statement

The thesis statement is perhaps the most important sentence in your paper. It states your argument unambiguously and creates expectations for what you will discuss in what follows. Your audience will decide whether to read the rest of the paper based on how compelling they find your thesis.

A thesis statement must be original, debatable, and specific.

Original

Many people could look at the same set of facts or theories and come to different conclusions. A strong thesis is grounded in the author's own interpretation of the facts. Based on your knowledge and analysis of outside evidence, what do you conclude, recommend, or argue?



You will read arguments and information from many experts to inform your argument, but YOU are the expert on your own argument!

Debatable

A thesis statement must go beyond fact and convey a stance. At the heart of a debate is agreement and disagreement. If your argument were indisputable, it wouldn't be an argument. In the example below, the first sentence might make a good hook, but it doesn't require any argumentation – it's simply a statement of fact. The second sentence is something many people agree with, but others might reasonably disagree.

Fact	Many corporations engage in philanthropy.
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Debatable	Modern corporations should engage in philanthropy.
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Specific

Strong thesis statements are also focused and specific. Let's take the thesis statement above. It's debatable, but it could tell us more about how the author plans to make this argument. For example:

Specific	Because corporations benefit from participating in society, they have an ethical obligation to give back through philanthropy.
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We still don't know exactly what the rest of the paper will say, but we expect the author to explain:

- How companies benefit from participating in society;
- Why they are ethically obliged to give back;
- How they should fulfill this obligation.

Let's try another:

Specific	Corporations with large philanthropic initiatives are more likely to appeal to modern American consumers, who tend to value social responsibility.
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It deals with the same broad topic, but this paper will be different from the prior. The author will need to demonstrate that:

- Modern consumers value philanthropy;
- Corporations with philanthropy are more successful;
- This approach is preferable to other strategies.