

Two Types of Thesis Statements

The thesis statement tells your reader about the paper's focus. This resource will describe characteristics of two general types of thesis statements:

1. **The "Point-of-View" or Argumentative thesis:** presents an argument or case to be made
2. **The "Scope" or Explanatory thesis:** outlines the scope of the paper

However, what different instructors require in a thesis statement can vary significantly, so first and foremost, be sure you find out from your instructor what kind of thesis statement is required. Your instructor may have additional criteria to consider.

1. The "Point-of-View" Thesis

The point-of-view kind of thesis is often required in papers for English, History, Political Science and Philosophy.

This type of thesis makes one main point which can also be described as the **key insight** you are explaining, the **central argument** you are putting forward, the **case** you are arguing, or the **claim** you are making. The purpose of your entire paper is to provide evidence and explanation that back up the thesis.

Characteristics of a "point-of-view" thesis

Suitable

The first and often most important part of developing a suitable thesis statement is **to make sure your topic and thesis stem directly from the assignment instructions for the paper**. Read your assignment instructions carefully, and make sure that your thesis is closely tied to what the teacher is asking you to do. Discussing assignment instructions with other students, with the instructor, and with a tutor can help you make sure your thesis is suitable. A second way to improve suitability of a thesis is to make sure it connects **to key concepts you are learning in the course**.

Specific, focused and/or limited

The thesis needs to focus your paper on a specific piece, aspect, or side of a general topic.

Ways to focus or limit a thesis include limiting the topic to one specific group of people (adolescents), to one time period (Trudeau's second term in office), to one geographical location (the library at Hastings and Main), to one specific character (Hamlet), to only the problem or to only the solution. Any number of these limiting factors can be combined to make the thesis specific.

Feasible

You need to be able to provide a well-developed set of supporting paragraphs for your thesis.

This means that you need to have enough material to fully support the thesis you have chosen. If you are not able to find enough research, or you don't have enough examples, reasons, expert opinions/quotations, facts, and explanations to fill up the size of the paper that you need to write, then you might have chosen the wrong topic. At the same time, if you have too much material for the size of the paper you were assigned, you need to further limit your thesis (see characteristic #2 above) so that the paper doesn't turn into a book.

Insightful

This means that you have a point to make that is worth making. Your main point or central idea should not be so obvious that most readers will already know what you are going to discuss or explain in the paper. Instructors do not want to read through points that are already common knowledge. They want to see that you have gained a more complex understanding of the topic than what people not in the course could come up with on a coffee break.

Significant

Your thesis should be important to the audience that would normally read these kinds of papers (your instructor and maybe your classmates). In other words, **it needs to be about what the audience will take seriously or care about.** If your audience can say “So what?” or “Why does that matter to us?” you might not have a significant case to make, or you may need to clarify the significance of your thesis to your audience. Try to anticipate their “so what?” question.

2. The “Scope Thesis”

For some assignments, the writer is not expected to take a point of view. Instead, they are expected to answer a series of questions or give information about a topic. These types of assignments are most common in Nursing, CFCS and Business courses.

For these types of assignments, the thesis states the subject of the paper or what the paper is about. Sometimes it may even include a short list of sub-topics included in the paper. For example, “This paper explores the challenges faced by people with bipolar disorder and suggests strategies communities can take to assist them.”

What characteristics should a “scope thesis” have?

- Be short and clear
- Be suitable to the assignment instructions
- Identify a scope that is feasible considering the length of paper assigned

What should you avoid when writing a thesis statement?

- Ø A question
- Ø Statements of fact that need no further support or proof
- Ø A detailed list of everything in your paper

Where do you put the thesis statement?

In a short paper, the thesis is often placed as the final sentence of the first paragraph, often called the introduction. However, an instructor may ask you to place your thesis in the first sentence of the introduction.