

THESIS STATEMENTS

In most research papers, the thesis statement represents the writer's overall argument for the paper, which will be supported and developed in each paragraph. Having a strong or weak thesis can make a significant difference in how well the writer states his/her claim and defends it, and it can also influence how well the reader understands and follows this argument.

MAKE IT ARGUABLE	Think of potential counter-arguments. If you can find several that seem plausible, then your thesis statement is probably an argument, not a simple statement. Try to make your thesis statement provocative. While you should not try to offend readers, make your argument memorable.
TELL YOUR READER WHAT THE TOPIC IS	What topic and which points will be focused on throughout the paper?
SUPPORT IT WITH CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION	Strong thesis statements are not dropped into the first paragraph. Discuss relevant information about the topic and "build up" to the argument. This prevents you from having to over-explain in your thesis and better places your argument in a larger discussion of the topic.
MAKE YOUR STANCE CLEAR	Don't treat your argument like a mystery. Instead, ensure that your reader understands your stance on the topic from the very beginning, so they will understand how each paragraph fits into your overall argument. When you can use 1 st person, verbs like argue, contend, posit, or claim to clearly state your position on the issue (e.g., "I contend that..."). These verbs act as "signal words" that direct the reader to your argument.
BE CLEAR	Remove your thesis from your paper and read it separately. Do you understand yourself? Instead of cryptic or vague language, strive for clarity and specificity.
SAY IT IN ONE SENTENCE	If you cannot write the thesis in one sentence, try to hone in on your claim. This is a good exercise because it forces you to better understand your own argument.
PUT IT IN YOUR INTRODUCTION	For research papers, the reader should understand how each paragraph supports your stance on the issue. Personal narratives are an exception to this rule.
BE COMPLEX	If you only have one or two points to make in regards to your thesis, can you add details to your argument in order to give yourself "more to write about" as you support it?
USE TOPIC SENTENCES TO RELATE BACK TO YOUR THESIS	A thesis statement is not a stand-alone sentence; it sets up the argument that will be developed in each paragraph/section. Once you have written your thesis statement, make sure that each paragraph's main point clearly supports the thesis. Make sure each supporting section advances the thesis in some way.

