

# Tips for Writing a THESIS Statement

Academic Skills Center Room 1501 Shoreline Community College

In a paragraph, writers can express a main idea in a topic sentence. In an essay, the central idea is expressed in a **thesis** sentence. The thesis sentence is usually in the introductory paragraph of a basic essay. Often it's the last or next-to-last sentence of the introductory paragraph. A good thesis sentence clearly states the point you want to make about the topic. Therefore, a good thesis contains a specific topic and the claim or assertion you make about the topic. Your thesis controls the content and focus of the entire essay. Everything you write in your essay must support the thesis sentence in a specific way.

**Example 1:** Students using the SQ3R reading method can significantly improve their reading comprehension.

In this example, the topic is *students using the SQ3R reading method*. The claim made is that those students "can significantly improve their reading comprehension."

**Example 2:** Parents should have equal responsibility for childcare and domestic chores when they both work outside the home.

In the second example, the topic is *parents who work outside the home*. The claim made about the topic is that those parents should have equal responsibility for childcare and domestic chores.

## Points To Remember

A thesis sentence must be more than simply a statement of fact.

**Simple statement:** Taking a multicultural studies course is required for graduation from Oregon State.

**Thesis sentence:** Students can improve their ability to interact successfully with people of various cultures by applying communication principles learned in a multicultural course.

In the original sentence, there is no assertion. It's just a statement of fact. No claim is being made about that fact. The second sentence, on the other hand, contains a *limited topic* (students' ability to interact with people of various cultures) and an assertion about that topic (students can improve their ability to interact... by applying certain communication principles).

Here are two more examples of the difference between a thesis sentence and a simple statement of fact:

**Simple statement:** Anna, the main character in the story, lived in poverty her whole life.

**Thesis sentence:** Anna's positive attitude changed the lives of the children and seniors in her community.

**Simple statement:** Many college professors use essay tests to assess their students' understanding of course material.

**Thesis sentence:** By reviewing lecture notes daily, participating in a study group, and writing answers to study questions, students increase their chances of doing well on essay tests.

## Four Questions to Ask Yourself

Sometimes you know what you want to write about (your topic), but you're not sure exactly what you want to say about it. In that case, ask yourself the four questions below. They will help you decide what claim (assertion) you can make about your topic.

### QUESTION

1. What is the *general topic*?
2. What is my *limited topic*?
3. What is my *opinion* about the limited topic?
4. What is my *purpose* for writing about this topic?

### ANSWER

- Advertising
- The appeal of soft drink advertising
- Soft drink advertisers use the lure of youth and sex to sell their products.
- To help readers be more discriminating when they buy soft drinks by showing them how advertisers try to get their business.