

THESIS STATEMENTS

Although they may have a variety of forms and purposes, all essays are essentially assertive. That is, they assert or put forward the writer's point of view on a particular subject. We call this point of view the essay's **thesis**, or main idea.

To help readers understand what is being said about a subject, writers often provide a thesis statement early in the essay. The **thesis statement** is usually a single sentence that declares the essay's main idea. It operates as a cue by letting readers know which is the most important, general idea among the writer's many ideas and observations. Like the focal point of a picture, the thesis statement directs the reader's attention to the one idea that brings all the other ideas and details into perspective.

Functions of the thesis statement

- It narrows the topic to a single idea that you want readers to gain from your essay.
- It asserts something about the topic, conveying your purpose, your opinion, and your attitude.
- It **may** provide a concise preview of how you will arrange your ideas in the essay.

Here are some examples of topics and corresponding thesis statements.

Topic	Thesis statement
1. Why the federal government should aid college students	If it hopes to win the technological race, the United States must make higher education possible for any student who qualifies academically.
2. The effects of strip-mining	Strip-mining should be tightly controlled in this region to reduce its pollution of water resources, its permanent destruction of the land, and its devastating effects on people's lives.
3. The dynamics of single-parent families	In families consisting of a single parent and a single child, the boundaries between parent and child often disappear so that the two interact as siblings or as a married couple.

SAMPLE ESSAY

including introduction, thesis statement (underlined), topic sentences, and conclusion.

Life Without Television

When my family's only television set went to the repair shop the other day, my parents, my sister, and I thought we would have a terrible week. How could we get through the long evenings in such a quiet house? What would it be like without all the shows to keep us company? We soon realized, though, that living without television was a stroke of good fortune because each of us could enjoy some activities alone, complete some postponed chores, and spend rewarding time with each other and friends.

First of all, with no television to compete for our time, we found plenty of hours for personal interests.

(supporting sentences)

Second, we did chores that had been hanging over our heads for too long.

(supporting sentences)

Finally, and probably most important, we spent time with each other.

(supporting sentences)

Once our television set returned, we were not prepared to put it in the attic. But we had a sense of how it can take over our lives if we are not careful. We are now more selective. We turn on the set for our favorite shows, certain sports events, and the news, but we don't leave it running all night. As a result, we find we can enjoy television and still have time left over for other activities and interests.

Note how the conclusion reinforces the thesis statement.

Adapted from The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, 3rd ed.; Little, Brown Handbook, 5th ed.; and College Writing Skills, 4th ed.

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