

Writing Center

Workshop Lesson Plan

Thesis Statements

Lesson Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To understand the purpose of a thesis statement2. To convey the importance of a one sentence thesis statement
Preparation: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review lesson plan, student handouts, and the activity answer key.2. Check if there are enough copies of all student handouts. Make copies if necessary.
Handouts: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Student Notes2. Practice Activity
Technology: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. N/A
Introductory Activity: 5-10 minutes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have students write three sentences about something they believe. Use the template: “I believe that _____ because _____.” You may get the question “Should I use “I believe” in academic writing? If this happens, make a short conversation of it, and then explain that students can also just “think” the “I believe” to get a more formal, concise statement.2. Have students give a few example sentences and discuss if you would be able to write a solid paper defending each.
Lecture Notes: 20-25 minutes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Go through Student Handout with the students. You may also demonstrate your own examples on the board. Ask students if they might offer examples from their own papers.
Practice Activity: 20-25 minutes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have students do Practice Activity.2. Have them rewrite one of the sentences they wrote in the introductory activity using the concepts they learned in the lesson.
Closing Notes: 5 minutes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review main ideas of lesson2. Take any last questions3. Encourage students to come back to the Writing Center
Opportunities for Additional Practice: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/

Writing Center
Workshop Lesson: Thesis Statements
Student Notes

A thesis statement has two parts: a **limited subject** and a **controlling idea**. The limited subject tells your reader what you will write about, while your controlling idea is what you will say about it.

Limiting Your Subject

Having a subject that is too big will lead to general statements that do not satisfy your reader. Ask yourself, “What is important? What is not important?” When you ask, “What will I write about the general subject?” your answer should be a specific topic called the limited subject.

General Subject	Limited Subject
Environment	The effects of global warming
Fashion	Dressing professionally for work
Television	Advertisements for children

Crafting Your Controlling Idea

Once you have a limited subject, you need to tell the reader your opinion on that limited subject. Your opinion on the limited subject is your *controlling idea*. Your job when writing a controlling idea is to persuade the reader that your point is valid and/or reasonable. **Everything else you write in your paper will defend your controlling idea.**

Limited Subject	Controlling Idea	Thesis Statement
The effects of global warming	The effects of global warming will impact the foods people eat	Although global warming has many negative effects, the impact on food availability will be the most severe.
Dressing professionally for work	Dressing professionally for work is important to getting respect	Dressing professionally at work means appearing clean and neat, being organized, and having a non-distracting hairstyle.
Advertisements for children	Advertisements unfairly influence children	Advertisements convince children to want toys, food, and other items that could be dangerous for their health.

Try thinking of a thesis statement as a one sentence declaration of the argument you will present about your limited subject.

Thesis statement = Limited subject + Controlling idea

Identify the limited subject and controlling idea in each of these thesis statements:

1. Track maintenance on the CTA Brown Line should be done in the middle of the night instead of during the day.
2. Spending more money on protecting the environment will decrease the country's health care costs in the long term.
3. People who throw cigarette butts on the ground should be fined for littering.

Dos and Don'ts of Thesis Statements

What a Thesis Statement Isn't

- A title
 - *Title:* Divorce over Nothing
 - *Thesis:* Too many people divorce for no good reason.
- An announcement of the subject
 - *Announcement:* In this paper I will write about why people get divorced.
 - *Thesis:* Of all the reasons why people get divorced, substance abuse is the most preventable.
- A fact
 - *Fact:* Fifty percent of people get divorced.
 - *Thesis:* Our divorce rates are so high because people get married when they aren't ready for commitment.

What a Thesis Statement Is

- Expresses a **clear opinion** about the limited topic
 - *Poor:* Divorce can be dangerous.
 - *Stronger:* Divorce is dangerous for children because they will not understand healthy romantic relationships.
- Discusses **one major idea**
 - *Poor:* Divorce is popular because people like to quit when things are difficult and people don't take the time to understand each other.
 - *Stronger:* Divorce is popular because it is too easy to obtain a divorce in many states.
- Discusses the major idea **specifically** (your thesis must be defensible in a multi-paragraph essay)
 - *Poor:* Divorce is negative.
 - *Stronger:* Divorce is harmful to us all because the family is the building block of society.

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Practice Activity

Write a T next to each thesis statement below. Write NT if there is no thesis statement.

1. ____ Knowing how to write well will help students obtain jobs.
2. ____ My husband cooks all the meals for our family, his hunting club, and the patrons at Al's Shrimp Restaurant, where he works.
3. ____ Christmas shopping shows that the law of the jungle is still a part of our lives.
4. ____ Is affirmative action is a new form of racism?
5. ____ It is not only poor people who receive money from the government; big business also gets money from the government and this should end.

Write G next to a good thesis statement. Write NI if it needs improvement and indicate why.

1. ____ The history of the United States is dominated by a lust for money.
2. ____ Exercise is a worthwhile activity.
3. ____ This paper will examine recent efforts to ease the parking problem in the city by pointing out new regulations clearly to motorists.
4. ____ The most important moment in my life was meeting my husband.

Take a look at the following thesis statements and re-write them for improvement on the lines below. Remember a complete thesis statement must state the opinion of the author.

Air pollution is caused in part by fossil fuel emissions, which are given off by gasoline burning vehicles.

This thesis needs improvement because

_____.

A better thesis might be: _____

_____.

This is a dangerous practice which should not be continued.

This thesis needs improvement because

_____.

A better thesis might be: _____

_____.

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Practice Activity ANSWER KEY

Write a T next to each thesis statement below. Write NT if there is no thesis statement.

6. T Knowing how to write well will help students obtain jobs.
7. NT My husband cooks all the meals for our family, his hunting club, and the patrons at Al's Shrimp Restaurant, where he works.
8. T Christmas shopping shows that the law of the jungle is still a part of our lives.
9. NT Is affirmative action is a new form of racism?
10. T It is not only poor people who receive money from the government; big business also gets money from the government and this should end.

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