

## What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is the basic stand a writer takes, an opinion a writer expresses about a topic. It is the controlling idea, tying together and giving purpose to all the details. The writer's main goal in an essay is to persuade the reader that the thesis is a valid one by supplying details, examples, and quotes - "the beef". Other secondary purposes may be to *inform, explain, entertain, alarm, or call to action*; however, unless the primary purpose is achieved, no secondary purpose stands a chance. A thesis, of course, is only a vibration in the brain until it is turned into words.

**Every essay requires a thesis statement.** Like an anchor, it gives a paper a clear focus and eliminates the problem of aimless drift. As a result it helps organize the paper because writers only

1. **use information that helps accomplish their goal.**
2. a thesis statement, then, is the main idea that **all the elements** of the paper should support.
3. It contains an opinion and is expressed in one sentence.

### A Thesis is Not:

#### A Thesis is not a title:

A title can often give the reader a clue of what the thesis is going to be, but the title is not a thesis. The thesis statement does not suggest the main idea; it is the main idea. Note: A thesis statement must also be a complete sentence.

#### **Example:**

*Title: Year Round School*

*Thesis Statement: Year round school is a disastrous concept with mythical benefits.*

#### A Thesis is not an Announcement of the Subject: ("My paper is about...")

A thesis takes a stand. It expresses an attitude or opinion about a subject. It is not the subject itself. MLA urges us not to use the personal pronouns I, me, you, your (unless the essay is a personal narrative.) It is acceptable to use the pronoun we.

#### **Example:**

*Announcement: My paper is on the incompetence of Mr. Law.*

*Thesis Statement: Mr. Law is an incompetent teacher.*

#### A Thesis is NOT a Statement of fact.

A thesis makes a judgment or interpretation. There is no need to write a whole paper supporting a statement that needs no support. A thesis must be **arguable**. **The addition of one opinion word will accomplish that goal.**

#### **Example:**

*Fact: The capital of Pennsylvania is Harrisburg.*

*Thesis: The capital of Pennsylvania is Harrisburg, but it should be Philadelphia.*