

Thesis Statements—Mapping a Course

If you've kept up with your reading assignments in school, you've encountered quite a few thesis statements already. You've probably even written a few of them yourself. However, it's never a bad idea to review exactly what thesis statements are--and why they are necessary for essays, reports, and speeches.

A thesis statement, which is sometimes called a claim statement, states the main idea of an essay, a report, or a speech. It includes two main ingredients: First, it clearly identifies your topic and what you believe to be true about your topic. Second, it summarizes the supporting evidence for your claim.

Here's an easy way to think about it:

Thesis statement = Your claim about a topic + the main reasons that support your claim

Thesis statements should appear at the beginning of your paper or speech. After all, you don't consult a map *after* you arrive at your destination, right? Often, but not always, the thesis comes at the end of the first paragraph—or in the paragraph right before you begin to present your first main idea.

Here's one more thing to remember about your thesis statement: It should list your main points or reasons in the order they will appear in your paper or speech. Since you generally write the thesis statement first, be sure to check it again after you've finished your rough draft to make sure your ideas are organized correctly.

Don't hesitate to spend a good deal of time crafting your thesis statement. A good, solid thesis statement ensures that you and your audience stay on the right track!
