

Thesis Statements

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To find the thesis, look for the sentence that best explains what the essay will be about. Which sentence in this paragraph provides that information?

The eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in A.D. 79 resulted in a perfectly preserved moment in history. Tragically, about 2,000 inhabitants died when the volcano erupted. Their homes were buried under volcanic ash, which preserved the artifacts and details of their daily lives.



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A **thesis statement** contains the main idea or message of a composition.

This is the thesis sentence. It indicates the topic of the essay and the writer's opinion about that topic.

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A successful thesis statement

- is usually one sentence
- is a statement, not a question
- identifies the subject of the essay or composition
- takes a stand rather than simply announcing a subject
- is narrow and specific enough to be fully supported

A thesis statement may also preview the main ideas of the essay and set the tone.



Thesis Statements

Which of these sentences are successful thesis statements?

Wolves have an impressive variety of communication abilities, including visual signals with ears and tails and howling and other vocalizations.

Each wolf pack is led by two individuals.

Today, because of habitat destruction and excessive hunting, wolves live in only a portion of their former range.

Wolves have an interesting history.



Thesis Statements

These two thesis statements are successful because they express specific ideas and suggest the direction the essay will take.

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When you write thesis sentences, you should avoid the following common errors. Click on the error you want to explore.

MENU

- **Simple statements of fact**
- **Simple announcements**
- **Broad, general opinions**

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Simple Statements of Fact

Statements of fact cannot be thesis statements because they do not take a position or suggest a direction for the writing.



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Simple Statements of Fact

Statements of fact cannot be thesis statements because they do not take a position or suggest a direction for the writing.

How would you change this statement of fact into a thesis?

The pioneers on the Oregon trail faced many hardships.



Thesis Statements

Simple Statements of Fact

Statements of fact cannot be thesis statements because they do not take a position or suggest a direction for the writing.

The revised thesis expresses an opinion about the topic, rather than just stating a fact. It also previews the main ideas of the essay.

ORIGINAL

The pioneers on the Oregon Trail faced many hardships.

REVISED

The pioneers on the Oregon Trail bravely faced many hardships, including disease, terrible weather, accidents, hunger, and thirst.



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Simple Announcements

A simple announcement doesn't express a point of view or preview the main ideas of the composition.



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Simple Announcements

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How would you rewrite this statement to make it an effective thesis?

In the following paper, I am going to write about impressionist painting.



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Simple Announcements

A simple announcement doesn't express a point of view or preview the main ideas of the composition.

This revised thesis expresses a point of view and previews the main ideas. It does not mention the paper and avoids the first person reference.

Two of the greatest techniques developed by impressionist painters were loose brushwork and the use of brilliant color.



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Broad, General Opinions

The statement of an opinion should be specific and narrow enough to be fully supported.



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How would you revise this broad statement?

The melting of the Arctic ice cap is an environmental disaster.



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The melting of the Artic ice cap **will affect not only the animals and people in the Artic region but also weather patterns and coastlines worldwide.**

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This thesis statement gives specific reasons that can be supported with evidence.

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