

The Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the essay. It should be contestable, proposing an arguable point with which people could reasonably disagree. A strong thesis is provocative and takes a stand.

A thesis is an assertion, not a statement of fact or an observation.

- **Fact or observation:** People use many lawn chemicals.
- **Thesis:** People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns green.

A thesis takes a stand, rather than announcing a subject.

- **Announcement:** In this essay I will prove that young people must solve the environmental problems of today.
- **Thesis:** For the survival of the human race it is imperative that young people of today create solutions to the many environmental problems they have inherited.

A thesis is the main idea, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what the essay is about.

- **Title:** The Canadian Pension Plan and Old Age
- **Thesis:** Continuing changes to the Canadian Pension Plan make it nearly impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.

A thesis is specific rather than vague or general.

- **Vague:** Hemingway's stories are good.
- **Specific:** Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and powerful vocabulary.

A thesis can be divided or undivided.

The undivided thesis

- presents the argument (main point) without any reasons or details

The divided thesis

- presents the argument and the main reasons in the argument
- the main reasons must be stated using parallel structure, in the order they will be presented in the essay.

Examples:

Undivided The government should require corporations to significantly reduce air pollution.

Divided The government should require corporations to significantly reduce air pollution because it causes smog, damage to buildings and lung cancer.