

- A **thesis** is a statement of the main idea of an essay or paper. It proposes an opinion that the rest of the paper proves. In school essays and other academic work, the thesis is usually stated in the opening paragraph, and the topic sentence of each paragraph that follows expands upon or supports the thesis.
- A thesis should be broad enough to include all the subtopics, information, or arguments presented in the essay. Statistics and other narrow statements of fact do not allow enough scope for opinion.

EXAMPLE: **Too Narrow:** Canada has participated in over seventy peacekeeping operations overseas.

- However, a thesis should also be narrow enough to enable you to cover it thoroughly in the space available. That is why you should avoid using extreme words such as all, never, or always in your thesis. Such statements are hard to back up.

EXAMPLES: **Too Broad:** Canadian Peacekeepers are the best in the world.  
**Focused:** The Canadian Armed Forces have developed a reputation for courage and compassion, as their role in three recent world conflicts demonstrates.

A. For each topic, underline the sentence that would make the best thesis for a short essay.

1. Topic: Naturalized Lawns
  - (a) A naturalized lawn is easier to maintain and better for the environment than the traditional grass lawn.
  - (b) A naturalized lawn is the only rational approach to lawn care.
  - (c) Naturalized lawns are lawns with vegetation that requires little maintenance.
2. Topic: Garbage Incineration
  - (a) Many communities still rely on incineration to deal with their garbage.
  - (b) Incineration of garbage is never a good idea.
  - (c) Incineration is not the definitive solution to the garbage problem, but it may have a role to play in helping us deal with our waste.
3. Topic: Starting a Summer Business
  - (a) One great way to guarantee yourself a summer job is to start your own business.
  - (b) Running your own summer business requires hard work, but it will give you great experience and a guaranteed summer job.
  - (c) Last year, the government helped a record number of students start their own businesses.
4. Topic: Oscar Peterson
  - (a) Oscar Peterson is arguably among the greatest jazz musicians Canada has ever produced.
  - (b) Oscar Peterson was born in a modest home in Montréal.
  - (c) Oscar Peterson believes that, "Regardless of it having been weakened by other forms of so-called music on the airways...somehow Jazz will maintain its creative place in the history of music of our world and time."
5. Topic: *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
  - (a) We tend to forget that the Charter is not just a list of rights; it also sets out our responsibilities as citizens.
  - (b) The Charter came into effect in 1982, as part of the repatriated Canadian Constitution.
  - (c) The Charter has changed every aspect of life in Canada.

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- Avoid using extreme terms such as all, never, and always in a thesis, unless you are sure you can back up what you are saying.

EXAMPLE: **Too broad:** All stress research today owes its existence to the work of Hans Selye.  
(It would be almost impossible to prove such a general statement.)

**Too narrow:** Hans Selye was the first to coin the term "stress" in relation to human beings.  
(This is an interesting fact, but it does not leave much room for the writer to expand upon it.)

**C. For each topic, underline the sentence that would make the best thesis for a short essay.**

1. Topic: Looking for a job
  - a) A successful job search requires both preparation and perseverance.
  - b) Looking for a job is hard work.
  - c) The unemployment rate for students is usually higher than the national average.
2. Topic: Canada's system of government
  - a) Canada was founded in 1867.
  - b) Canada has the best system of government in the world.
  - c) Canada is both a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy.

**D. Write a thesis that expresses the main idea behind each of the following groups of sentences.**

1. Topic sentence 1: Many video games require strong problem-solving skills.

Topic sentence 2: Manipulating a controller or mouse can increase the user's manual dexterity.

Topic sentence 3: Often, games can be played with a partner, and the numerous clubs for video-game enthusiasts give players more opportunities for social interaction.

Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Topic sentence 1: The family is the first agent of socialization that most of us encounter.

Topic sentence 2: Schools have a strong socializing influence as well.

Topic sentence 3: As we get older, our peers become increasingly important as agents of socialization.

Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

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