

THESIS STATEMENT

A “thesis statement” is a name given to a central idea when it is written out as a sentence. A thesis, or theme, is simply the stand the writer takes on an issue or the main point he or she wants to make about a subject.

The Decline of American Cities, for example, is not a thesis statement but a title. In fact, it isn't a sentence, and a thesis statement must be a complete sentence. “*My subject is the decline of American cities*” is not a thesis statement but an announcement to the reader. “*The decline of American cities is deplorable*” is not a thesis statement because it needs no essay to support it; it is an obvious statement of fact.

An effective thesis statement controls the writing. A poorly worded thesis statement guarantees a poorly constructed, badly focused, and uninteresting piece of writing. A writer should pay attention to the following guidelines when forming a thesis statement:

1. **An effective thesis statement is limited or narrowed down from a larger statement. The idea is to give yourself a manageable, limited piece of territory to cover.**

Large: *Our tax burdens are too great.*

Narrower: *Federal tax rates penalize people for being single.*

2. **An effective thesis statement is singular. More than one major idea in an essay is too many.**

Multiple: *Contributions to our mounting ecological problems will be made by the energy crisis, rapid increases in world population, and the plans for modern industrial development by third-world countries.*

--OR--

Singular: *The energy crisis is contributing to our mounting ecological problems.*

--OR--

Singular: *Plans for industrial development by third-world countries will contribute to our ecological problems.*

--OR--

Singular: *Rapid increases in world population will contribute to our ecological problems.*

3. **An effective thesis statement is concrete. A thesis statement that is limited and singular must also be concrete. Avoid abstract or vague expressions.**

Vague: *Those who watch their cholesterol care about their health.* (What aspect of health?)

Concrete: *Lowering cholesterol intake reduces one's chances of coronary artery disease.*