THESIS STATEMENTS

A thesis statement presents the main idea of an essay. It is usually placed at the end of the introductory paragraph, gives the topic of the essay, and states the writer’s attitude or claim about the subject. It relays to the reader that only ideas mentioned in the thesis statement will be discussed.

In order to write a good thesis statement, begin by asking a question about the topic.

   TOPIC: gasoline prices
   QUESTION: What causes fluctuations in gasoline prices?
   TURN THE QUESTION INTO A POSITION: Gasoline prices fluctuate because of consumer demand, international politics, and oil companies’ policies.

THE THESIS STATEMENT IS NEVER A QUESTION BUT A STATEMENT. Never begin a thesis statement with an announcement: “I am going to discuss racial profiling in this paper.”

THE THESIS WITH POINTS LISTED
A thesis with points listed presents the main idea along with the points of development. These points are listed in the order in which they will be discussed in the essay. Listing thesis points provides a road map that allows the reader to see where the essay is headed.

Examples of a thesis with points listed:
   • A formula for a successful lawn care business includes clever advertising, competitive prices, and reliable service.
   • Price, performance, and fit are factors to consider when shopping for athletic shoes.

When listing thesis points, the points should be written in parallel structure; each point needs to be written in the same grammatical structure.

   Nonparallel thesis points: New York is an exciting city to visit because of museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the American Museum of Natural History, many Broadway plays have tickets available, and going to Ellis Island or seeing the Statue of Liberty.

   Parallel thesis points: New York is an exciting city to visit because of its fascinating museums, Broadway plays, and historic sites.
EXERCISE – In each pair of thesis statements, circle the letter of the thesis with the strongest parallel structure.

1. A dog is an ideal animal companion because dogs are protective, suit my active lifestyle, and a dog can be trained.
   B. A dog is an ideal animal companion for me because a dog will protect me, join me in outdoor activities, and respond to training.

2. A. Looking at a Google Maps photo of my childhood home, I see that it is small, neater, and prettier than I remember.
   B. Looking at a Google Maps photo of my childhood home, I see that it is really small, has been take care of, and pretty.

3. A. Text messaging is perfect for short messages because it is quiet, unlike calling on a cell phone, and it is quick and does not interrupt the person being called.
   B. Text messaging is perfect for short messages because it is quieter, faster, and less distracting than a phone call.

ANALYZE THE THESIS STATEMENTS BELOW BY ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

1. Good students are likely to attend class regularly, participate enthusiastically, and study often.
   A. What is the topic of the essay?  

   B. List the points in the order of presentation. Note the parallel structure.

   ____________________________________________________________

2. Mandatory motorcycle helmet laws should be enacted in all states to decrease fatalities, reduce insurance rates, and save taxpayer money.
   A. What is the topic?  

   B. List the points in the order of presentation.

   ____________________________________________________________
COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING THESIS STATEMENTS, MAKING SURE TO LIST THE POINTS IN PARALLEL STRUCTURE.

1. Classmates who talk in class, ______________________, and ______________________ are disruptive influences.

2. Small towns have advantages over large cities in that they are ______________________ ______________________, and ______________________.

THE THESIS WITHOUT POINTS LISTED

The thesis without points listed presents the central idea of the essay without listing the points of development. Without the road map that listing the points provides, it is even more important that the essay flow logically and smoothly. Thrus, topic sentences require careful planning so that they are clearly connected to the thesis.

Example of development of thesis statement that does not list points together with possible topic sentences for each body paragraph.

Thesis: Year-round attendance at public school has advantages.

Topic sentence:

Body paragraph 1: For working parent, a longer school year would ease summer child-care problems.

Body paragraph 2: Year-round school attendance would prevent “brain drain” during summer vacation.

Body paragraph 3: A longer school year would lead to higher student achievement.

AVOID IDEAS IN THESIS STATEMENTS THAT ARE TOO BROAD TO DEVELOP IN THE PAPER.

Example: Steroids are a problem in sports.

AVOID IDEAS THAT ARE TOO NARROW OR FACTUAL.

Example: “Neonatal” refers to the branch of pediatric medicine dealing with newborns.
Circle the best written thesis statement.

1. Christmas involves the family.

2. Crimes occur during Christmas.

3. Christmas is celebrated on December 25.

4. Crimes of domestic disturbance increase at Christmas because of increased stress from finances, family issues, and winter depression.

And finally, use the assignment sheet given by the instructor to create the thesis statement. The following thesis statements all concern the subject of eating disorders:

Match the type of essay with the correct thesis statement.

A. Reflective essay  B. Informative essay  C. Analysis  D. Argument

1. Anorexia nervosa is diagnosed when patients weigh 15% under the normal body weight for their height and is characterized by starvation, excessive exercise, and sometimes forced vomiting.

2. Less money and effort should be spent to find drugs to treat eating disorders, and more effort should go toward teaching adolescents to deal with negative thoughts about their bodies and to develop a positive body image.

3. My younger sister overcame her bulimia disorder during her last two years of high school when successes in school and in music improved her self-esteem.

4. The causes of eating disorders are not a failure of will but are medical illnesses that take on a life of their own.