

WHAT NOT TO DO: THESIS STATEMENT

Sure, looking at what to do is helpful, but sometimes looking at what not to do can be of even greater help. So, what shouldn't you do with a thesis statement?

In general, with thesis statements:

- Don't have sentence fragments.
- Don't have unrelated main points. If your thesis is about the character development in *The English Patient*, then you shouldn't have a main point about the life of author.
- A thesis doesn't announce what you're going to do. In other words, don't write "The goal of this paper is..." This is called a purpose statement; in addition, purpose statements aren't usually written within the paper.
- Don't be neutral. Take a stand.
- Don't write the thesis as a fact. Nobody would disagree with the "fact" below. Instead, argue why Obama won the election; this isn't a fact, but rather an opinion.
 - Fact: Barack Obama won the 2008 Presidential election.
 - Thesis: Barack Obama won the 2008 Presidential election because his grassroots campaign performed well in rural counties, his promise about creating new jobs resonated, and rust-belt voters wanted a change in party leadership.
- Don't write your thesis without doing the research. Thesis statements are educated opinions, not tweets.
- Don't be too general.
- Don't overcomplicate your thesis.
- Don't write the thesis as a question. A statement isn't a question.
- Don't state your opinion in the first person. "I believe," and "I think" are both unacceptable in thesis statements. Yes, it's technically your opinion, but the goal of a thesis and a thesis paper is to argue your opinion so eloquently that it can convince others, therefore making the "I" behind "I believe" irrelevant.
- Quotes don't count as thesis statements. Quotes are often used in the introduction, but not the thesis itself.
- Don't insult the people who you're trying to persuade. "Any idiot can see," whether explicit or implicit, never works as the beginning of a thesis.

Resources Used: "Writing Tips: Thesis Statements," by Center for Writing Studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
"Tips on Writing a Thesis Statement," by Gustavus Adolphus College, Writing Center.
"Thesis Statements," by Roane State Community College.