

A THESIS STATEMENT IS A SENTENCE (OR SOMETIMES TWO SENTENCES) IN YOUR PAPER THAT STATES YOUR ARGUMENT OR MAIN IDEA. OFTEN, THE THESIS STATEMENT IS THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PAPER. A GOOD THESIS STATEMENT SHOULD BE SPECIFIC AND CLEARLY OUTLINE YOUR SPECIFIC CLAIM.

WRITING AN ARGUABLE THESIS

A general comment about a topic is **not** a thesis statement. Your thesis statement must make an argument. The kind of argument depends on the subject (history, English, etc.), but in every subject, you must do more than make a general statement: you must make an *arguable* statement.

Not Arguable:

Teachers face many challenges.

In 1362, the English parliament passed a statute mandating the use of English in law courts.

Arguable:

Two major challenges faced by today's teachers include reduced funding and invasive federal policy on education.

The English parliament's ratification in 1362 of a statute mandating the use of English in law courts was a pivotal moment in the fourteenth century trend toward Anglicization in the face of continual cultural and military conflict with France during the Hundred Years' War.

The "Not Arguable" statements are too general or too widely agreed upon to be good arguments. No one would argue that teachers do not face any challenges; nor would anyone argue that a widely-acknowledged historical event did not happen. The argument lies in the interpretation. The "Arguable" examples go beyond general statements to make claims about the significance of the topic.

WRITING AN ORGANIZED THESIS

A well-written thesis should be organized in a logical order. For example, in a problem/solution paper, it is logical to establish that there is a problem before you propose a solution to it, so the thesis should reflect that logical structure.

Poor Organization: Smoking should be outlawed because it kills people.

Better Organization: Smoking is a serious problem because it harms the health of both smokers and nonsmokers; however, a viable two-part solution to the dangerous problem of smoking is to increase the tax on cigarettes and ban smoking in public places.

The previous example of “Poor Organization” inverts the logical order of the paper: it puts the proposed solution before the problem, and it is not specific about either the problem or the solution. The example of “Better Organization” above provides a logical sequence and breaks down the argument into parts. As readers, we can anticipate how the paper’s argument will be arranged.

- I. The Problem of Smoking
 - a. negative health effects on smokers
 - b. negative health effects on nonsmokers
- II. Solutions to the Problem of Smoking
 - a. increasing taxes on cigarettes
 - b. banning smoking in public places

USING A FORMULA TO WRITE YOUR THESIS

Thesis statements vary from discipline to discipline. History papers, psychology papers, and English papers need different kinds of arguments, so they need different kinds of thesis statements. A thesis statement includes three main parts: the topic, the position, and (often) the main points of the argument. See how the examples of good thesis statements from this handout break down into parts below.

Topic	Position	Main Points
Challenges faced by today’s teachers	(there are) two major challenges faced by today’s teachers	the two major challenges include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced funding ● federal policy
1362 statute mandating the use of English in Law courts	was a pivotal moment in the trend toward Anglicization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It resulted from conflict with France during the Hundred Years’ war --cultural conflict --military conflict
Smoking	is a problem and should be solved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Smoking harms the health of smokers and nonsmokers ● The problem can be solved by increasing taxes on cigarettes and banning smoking in public places.

If you are having trouble writing a thesis, use the chart below to outline your topic, position, and main points.

Topic	Position	Main Points