

Writing a Thesis Statement: Successfully Asserting Your Opinion in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
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Handout 1

What Makes a Strong Thesis Statement?

The best foundation for a well-organized essay is a strong, clear thesis statement.

A *thesis statement* is a sentence at the beginning of your essay or paragraph that summarizes the claim you are making. But what makes a good thesis statement? Here are three ways to determine if the statement is strong:

Answer what the prompt asks and make it arguable: Carefully read the prompt you have been given. Does it ask you to make an argument for something or to make a counterclaim? Does it ask you why you feel the way you do, or does it ask you how to create change? Ensure that your claim firmly responds to your prompt.

Make sure your claim addresses “why”: Do not just state whether you agree or disagree. Explain why you support your position with specific examples, facts, or reasons. Think of your thesis statement as a preview of what the rest of your essay will cover.

In addition, make sure that your statement is a debatable stance that you can support with evidence. It should not simply be a factual statement.

Today, we'll be looking at examples of good thesis statements, fixing some poor ones, and then writing and editing your own.

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Handout 2

Identifying a Good Argumentative Thesis Statement

Addressing the Prompt

Directions: For each question, read the prompt and then select the thesis statement that best addresses it. Explain why you made that choice.

Example:

Prompt: Should college football players be paid for their time at a college? Why do you think so?

A. I agree that college football players should be paid.

B. College football players should be paid because they dedicate the same time, risk level, and financial contribution to their organization as professional football players do.

Why? I think (B) is the stronger thesis statement because it clearly explains three reasons college athletes should be paid, while (A) only states the opinion.

1. Prompt: Is a hot dog a sandwich? Why or why not?

A. A hot dog is a sandwich because it shares similarities with a deli sandwich and provides the same satisfaction.

B. A hot dog is not a sandwich, and it is also not a taco.

Why? _____

2. Prompt: Choose a social issue and propose a solution for how to fix it.

A. The criminal justice system should change because some criminals should be given a second chance to be better citizens and live a normal life.

B. The criminal justice system needs to focus on rehabilitating criminals and increasing the accuracy of crime-catching technology.

Why? _____

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- 3. Prompt:** Is there a problem with fake news on social media? Why or why not?
- A. Fake news can sometimes be a problem on social media, but sometimes it is accurate.
 - B. Fake news is becoming a problem on social media, spreading misinformation, and creating fear and suspicion among loved ones.

Why? _____

- 4. Prompt:** Choose an environmental problem and propose a solution.
- A. As landfills pile high with non-degradable waste, Americans should focus on reducing their consumption, using glass instead of plastic, and recycling paper and appropriate plastic materials.
 - B. American citizens should be concerned about their garbage output because landfills run out of space, and the overflow damages the oceans.

Why? _____

Not “What,” but “Why” or “How”

Directions: For each pair of thesis statements, choose the stronger one and explain why you chose it.

Example:

- A. College football players should be paid because they deserve it and work hard for their team.
- B. College football players should be paid because they dedicate the same time, risk level, and financial contribution to their organization as professional football players do.**

Why? I think (B) is the stronger thesis statement because it clearly explains three reasons college athletes should be paid, while (A) only states an opinion. Furthermore, the reasoning for (A) is not arguable; it's a personal opinion.

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1. A. Junk food is bad for your health, and school officials need to stop students from eating it.
B. Junk food negatively affects health and should be regulated in school lunchrooms and replaced with healthier alternatives.

Why? _____

2. A. Kids should be allowed to own phones because it teaches them responsibility, gives them independence, and helps them be safer.
B. Kids should be allowed to own phones as long as they are capable of handling the consequences of misusing them.

Why? _____

3. A. A vegan diet should be considered because it is healthy for people and good for animals.
B. People should switch to a vegan diet because it lowers the risk of heart disease, reduces animal cruelty, and increases energy levels.

Why? _____

4. A. Animals should not be kept in zoos because they should be allowed to be wild instead.
B. Animals should not be kept in zoos because it can be damaging to their physical and mental health.

Why? _____

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Handout 3

Writing and Editing an Effective Thesis Statement

Addressing the Prompt

Directions: Use this handout to brainstorm, write, and edit your thesis statement. Hand in your finished thesis statement to your teacher as an exit ticket.

1. Rewrite your teacher's essay prompt here:.

2. Circle the key words that tell you what the prompt is asking.

3. Circle whether you agree or disagree with the prompt, and explain why.

Agree Disagree

Explanation: _____

Not "What," but "Why"

1. Now that you have a claim, consider the three most important reasons you've taken this stance.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

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You now have your claim and the rest of your reasoning outlined.

2. Here is the challenge—Write your claim and how you will support it below...and try to fit it all in one sentence. This is your first attempt at a thesis statement. Use the good examples in Handout #1 as a reference.
