

Write Your Thesis Statement

Brief: In contrast to your general and specific purpose statements, which are all about your audience, your thesis statement is all about your topic.

Learning Objective: Demonstrate how to write an effective thesis statement.

Key Terms:

- **Thesis statement:** A concise summary of the main points or claims of your speech.

What is a Thesis Statement?

Your thesis statement will offer a concise summary of the main points or claims of your speech. Just as a written thesis statement usually appears at the middle or end of the introductory paragraph of a research paper, a thesis statement is generally shared as part of the introduction of a speech.

In contrast to your general and specific purpose statements, which are all about your audience, your thesis statement is all about your topic. After you have conducted enough research to sufficiently narrow your topic and select your main points, you are ready to tackle your thesis statement.

Your thesis statement should be expressed in one sentence that contains your topic and your main ideas. For example, if your topic is "Why I Love New York" your thesis statement might be, "I love New York because of the food, the jazz clubs, and the Broadway shows." In this way, your thesis statement gives your audience a preview of what they can expect from your speech content.

Sub-points that further define the main points, such as the name and examples of specific food, jazz clubs, or Broadway venues, are not included in the thesis statement.



Your Thesis and Your Organization

Through the process of conducting enough research to sufficiently narrow your topic and choose your main points, you're already had to make decisions about what to include and what to leave out. Now, that you've chosen what's most important, you're ready to determine how you're going to organize your information. When you define your thesis, you are essentially constructing the outline of your speech.

How you choose to order your main ideas in your thesis statement, such as by order of importance or by chronological order, will give you clues as to the best way to organize and develop the body of your speech.

Building on your thesis statement as the foundation for your organization, you will develop your main ideas in the course of your speech through support materials drawn from your research.

Thesis Placement

The thesis should be introduced near the beginning of your speech, usually at the conclusion of your introductory remarks as a way of introducing the audience to your specific topic.

It can be helpful to think about your thesis as a kind of promise that you make to your audience. In a sense you're saying, "By the end of my speech you'll know specifically what it is about the food, jazz clubs, and Broadway shows that cause me to love New York." If you lose your focus and begin to talk about your hotel or the details of your plane flight and run out of time to include information about Broadway shows, you will have broken the promise you made to your audience included in your thesis statement.

It can also be helpful to give a quick overview of just how you plan to achieve your promise, in another few sentences immediately following your thesis statement. For example, "I'm going to share with you the highlights of a recent, memorable trip to New York to celebrate my 30th birthday."

At the end of the speech, it can be effective to restate your thesis in order to assert to your audience that you have fulfilled your promise.

From Concept to Action

To gain experience writing a thesis statement, practice writing the same thesis statement in several different ways. Begin with your topic and three main points. Write your first thesis statement placing your main points in the order that makes the most sense to you. Then, write it again using the next best order. Finally, write your thesis statement a third time using the least effective order. Reflect on how varying the order of your main points impacts the effectiveness of your thesis statement as well as how the order will impact the subsequent organization of your speech.

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