

ORGANIZATION

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement **MUST**:

- narrow your topic to one central idea
- make an assertion or explanatory statement about some subject matter

A thesis statement **USUALLY**:

- shows how the supporting information will be arranged
- appears at the end of the introduction

Literature

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* demonstrates the terrible effects of slavery on the human psyche through the main character, Sethe.

Film

While Luke Skywalker is considered a hero in *Star Wars*, he was actually a criminal since he was responsible for the deaths of many thousands on the Death Star.

Philosophy

Hobbes correctly argues that government's primary responsibility is the safety of its people, which is necessary on social, economic, and religious grounds.

History

Colonialism was almost always brutal, but it created a set of political, military, and economic institutions that prepared newly formed states for the globalized world.

Government

Special interest groups are often criticized, but these groups of citizens represent diverse interests in society and are essential for democracy to flourish.

Biology

Based on evidence from the fields of cell biology, biochemistry, and paleontology, Lynn Margulis made significant contributions to evolutionary biology by proposing that several fundamental transitions in evolution occurred, not through competition and speciation, but through cooperation, when distinct cell lineages joined together to become a single organism.

Common Problems

Draft The first polygraph was developed by Dr. John A. Larson in 1921.

Problem: The thesis is *too factual*. A reader cannot disagree with it or debate it, so no further development of this idea is needed.

Strategy: *Enter a debate* by posing a question to yourself about your topic that has more than one possible answer. For example: Should the polygraph be used by private employers? Your thesis should be your answer to that question.

Thesis Because the polygraph has not been proved reliable, even under controlled conditions, its use by employers should be banned.

Draft Would John F. Kennedy have continued to escalate the war in Vietnam if he had lived?

Problem: The thesis is a *question*, not an answer to a question.

Strategy: *Take a position* on your topic by answering the question you asked.

Thesis Although John F. Kennedy sent the first American troops to Vietnam before he died, an analysis of his foreign policy suggests that he would not have escalated the war had he lived.

Draft Mapping the human genome has many implications for health and science.

Problem: The thesis is *too broad*. Even in a very long research paper, you would not be able to discuss all the implications of mapping the human genome.

Strategy: *Consider subtopics of your original topic*. Once you have chosen a subtopic, take a position in an ongoing debate and pose a question that has more than one answer.

Thesis Although scientists can now detect genetic predisposition for specific diseases, policymakers should establish guidelines about whom to test and under what circumstances.