

# Thesis and Purpose Statements

Use the guidelines below to learn the differences between thesis and purpose statements.

In the first stages of writing, thesis or purpose statements are usually rough or ill-formed and are useful primarily as planning tools.

A thesis statement or purpose statement will emerge as you think and write about a topic. The statement can be restricted or clarified and eventually worked into an introduction.

As you revise your paper, try to phrase your thesis or purpose statement in a precise way so that it matches the content and organization of your paper.

## Thesis statements

A thesis statement is a sentence that makes an assertion about a topic and predicts how the topic will be developed. It does not simply announce a topic: it says something about the topic.

**Good:** X has made a significant impact on the teenage population due to its . . .

**Bad:** In this paper, I will discuss X.

A thesis statement makes a promise to the reader about the scope, purpose, and direction of the paper. It summarizes the conclusions that the writer has reached about the topic.

A thesis statement is generally located near the end of the introduction. Sometimes in a long paper, the thesis will be expressed in several sentences or an entire paragraph.

A thesis statement is focused and specific enough to be proven within the boundaries of the paper. Key words (nouns and verbs) should be specific, accurate, and indicative of the range of research, thrust of the argument or analysis, and the organization of supporting information.

## Purpose statements

A purpose statement announces the purpose, scope, and direction of the paper. It tells the reader what to expect in a paper and what the specific focus will be.

Common beginnings include:

"This paper examines . . .," "The aim of this paper is to . . .," and "The purpose of this essay is to . . ."

A purpose statement makes a promise to the reader about the development of the argument but does not preview the particular conclusions that the writer has drawn.

A purpose statement usually appears toward the end of the introduction. The purpose statement may be expressed in several sentences or even an entire paragraph.

A purpose statement is specific enough to satisfy the requirements of the assignment. Purpose statements are common in research papers in some academic disciplines, while in other disciplines they are considered too blunt or direct. If you are unsure about using a purpose statement, ask your instructor.

This paper will examine the ecological destruction of the Sahel preceding the drought and the causes of this disintegration of the land. The focus will be on the economic, political, and social relationships which brought about the environmental problems in the Sahel.

## Sample purpose and thesis statements

The following example combines a purpose statement and a thesis statement (bold).

The goal of this paper is to examine the effects of Chile's agrarian reform on the lives of rural peasants. The nature of the topic dictates the use of both a chronological and a comparative analysis of peasant lives at various points during the reform period. . . **The Chilean reform example provides evidence that land distribution is an essential component of both the improvement of peasant conditions and the development of a democratic society. More extensive and enduring reforms would likely have allowed Chile the opportunity to further expand these horizons.**

For more tips about writing thesis statements, see “[Developing a Thesis Statement](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Thesis.html)” at <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Thesis.html>

Source: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Thesis\\_or\\_Purpose.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Thesis_or_Purpose.html)