What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement consists of one to two sentences that clearly state the main point or purpose of an essay and summarize the specific parts that the essay will discuss.

A thesis statement contains the main point of your essay. This main point is:

- <u>an argument, idea, or opinion that expresses a particular point of view</u>
  - ☒ **NO:** Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States. – *This is a fact that does not express a particular point of view.*
  - ☒ **NO:** This essay is about the culture of Washington, D.C. – *This announces the topic, but does not express an idea or opinion about the topic.*
  - ☒ **NO:** How is Washington, D.C. different from other cities? – *This is a question.*
  - ✓ **YES:** The culture of Washington, D.C. is different from other cities because it is the capital of the United States. – *This is an opinion with a particular point of view.*

- <u>one complete thought with a subject, verb, and object</u>
  - ☒ **NO:** Online Monitoring of Employees. – *This is a sentence fragment or a title.*
  - ☒ **NO:** Monitoring the internet use of employees is valuable to companies, and so are drug tests and background checks. – *This is more than one complete thought.*
  - ✓ **YES:** Monitoring the internet use of employees is valuable to companies. – *This is one complete thought written as a full sentence.*

- <u>a narrow and specific subject</u>
  - ☒ **NO:** Television shows criticize the past and the present. – *This is a broad subject.*
  - ✓ **YES:** While *MASH* was set in the Korean War, it also criticized the Vietnam War. – *This narrows "television shows" to a specific show (*MASH*) and "the past and the present" to two specific historical events.*

A thesis statement contains two or three <u>supporting ideas</u> that directly relate to the main point. The supporting ideas are listed in the order that they will be discussed in the essay.

- ☒ **NO:** Sheep are useful farm animals because they are common animals, they produce wool, and they are cute. – *Two of the supporting ideas do not connect with the main point. "Common animals" and "cute" are not reasons sheep are useful.*
- ✓ **YES:** Sheep are useful farm animals because they produce wool, cheese, and meat. – *Three supporting ideas ("produce wool, cheese, and meat") directly relate to the main idea that sheep are useful.*

<u>For More Help:</u>
- ➤ See the WRL Center handout **Developing a Working Thesis**.

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