



Writing a thesis statement

In an essay, the thesis statement is the most important sentence in your introduction – it's the core idea and states the position you will argue throughout the essay. Your thesis statement tells your reader what you are aiming to establish by the end of the essay.

The role of a thesis statement

The thesis statement narrows the scope of the assignment question and tells the reader what you will focus on and argue. Each paragraph in your essay should link back to your thesis statement.

A good thesis statement should:

- clearly address the topic and focus on a specific aspect/angle
- indicate your overall or general position in relation to the topic/question
- be brief, direct and unambiguous
- be debatable, meaning it must be possible to present a case for and against the statement made (but you argue for one side).

Example

Essay question:

What effect does alcohol have on wellbeing in Western Australian society?

X Unclear Thesis Statement (too broad, no argument):

This essay will examine the effect that alcohol has on wellbeing in Western Australian society.

✓ Clear Thesis Statement:

This essay will examine per capita levels of alcohol consumption in Western Australia and argue that current levels of consumption have a predominantly negative effect on people's social and economic wellbeing.

Example**Essay question:**

Injuries sustained during extreme sports should not be treated at publicly-funded hospitals. Write an essay considering this proposition.

X Unclear Thesis Statement (no argument/position):

This essay will consider the social limits of publicly-funded medicine in Australia as it applies to voluntary recreational activities with elevated risks of injury.

✓ Clear Thesis Statement:

This essay will consider the social limits of publicly-funded medicine in Australia as it applies to voluntary recreational activities with elevated risks of injury, and will argue that public health has a duty to treat all injuries regardless of personal culpability.

Where your thesis statement is placed

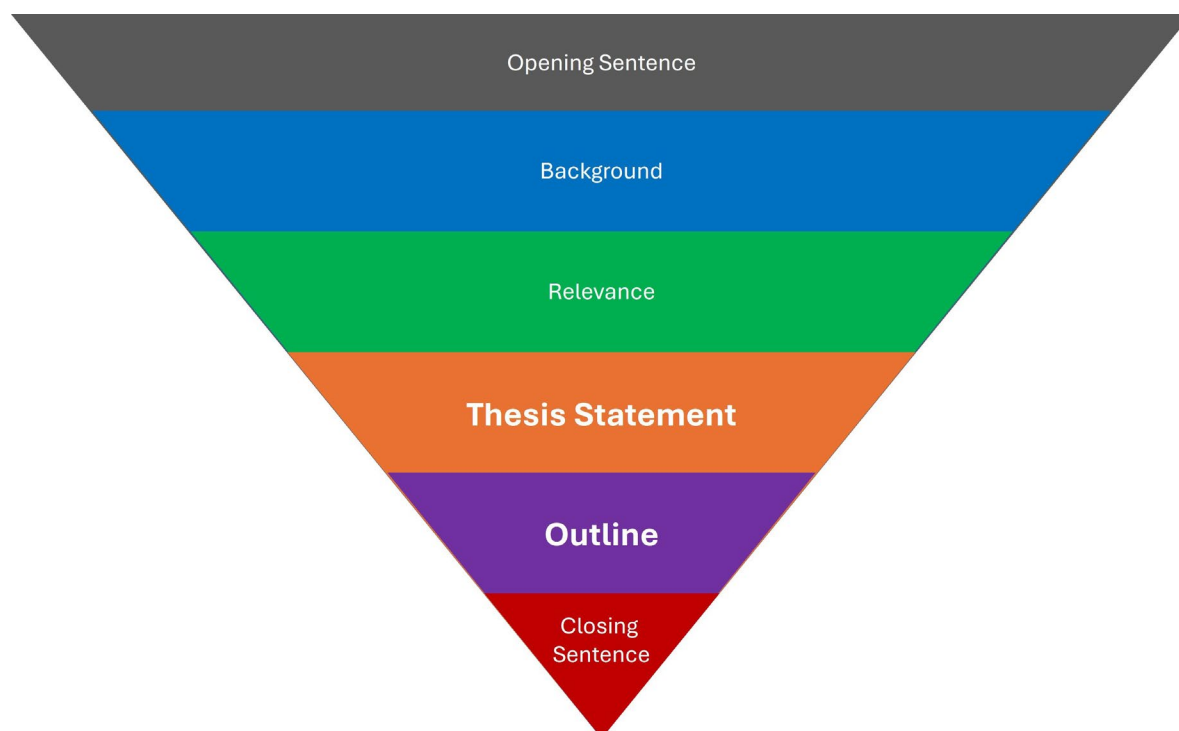


Figure 1: Structure of an introduction.

Image long description: the structure of an introduction represented as an inverted triangle split into 6 sections. In order, a grey band containing the words "Opening Sentence", a blue band containing the word "Background", a green band with the word "Relevance", an orange band with the words "Thesis Statement", a purple band with the word "Outline", and a maroon band with the words "Closing Sentence". The triangle represents the introduction moving from broad statements at the start to more focused statements at the end.

Your thesis statement is placed in the introduction after giving a brief background and establishing the relevance of the essay question. For further information, refer to our academic skills resource on writing an introduction.

Following the thesis statement, you provide an **outline** of the main points you will use to support your claim.

Example thesis statement and outline

With growing demands to meet student needs, face-to-face lectures will be non-existent in Australian universities by 2030. This inevitable demand for lectures to be uploaded online is due to increased cost of campus parking, a growing number of online students, more international students wanting to be able to replay content, students with special needs requiring easier access or captions, and students in general wanting flexible viewing time.

← Thesis Statement

← Outline / Support for Claim

Figure 2: Example of a thesis statement and outline.

Image long description: orange text labelled "Thesis Statement" reads: "With growing demands to meet student needs, face-to-face lectures will be non-existent in Australian universities by 2030." Purple text labelled "Outline / Support for Claim" reads "This inevitable demand for lectures to be uploaded online is

due to increased cost of campus parking, a growing number of online students, more international students wanting to be able to replay content, students with special needs requiring easier access or captions, and students in general wanting flexible viewing time."

Tips

- A thesis statement can include an explanation of why this is your position; however, it should be succinct.
- The outline statement should reflect the structure of your essay paragraphs. Each paragraph should make a new point that builds on the main argument in your thesis statement.
- Some disciplines prefer the thesis statement to be at the end of the introduction; check the assignment instructions.

How to write a thesis statement

1. Start by highlighting the keywords in the essay question and brainstorming ideas and views.
2. Decide which aspect of the topic/question you want to focus on.
3. Decide which position you are going to take (for or against).
4. Write your thesis statement in plain English.
5. Keep rewriting it until it has a strong academic tone and clear perspective.
6. Ask yourself, "Do I have enough evidence to convince the reader of my point?"

It's a good idea to start with a provisional thesis statement and then refine it once you have written more of your essay and built your argument. However, you should always have a clear position before you begin writing.

Your thesis statement will evolve as you:

- read more sources and gain new insights
- gather more evidence
- analyse and brainstorm ideas
- critique and write
- edit and proofread.

Tips

- Use keywords from the essay question in your thesis statement to ensure you are answering the question directly.
- Rephrase your thesis statement to include in your conclusion. This helps to reinforce your central argument. Using synonyms and restructuring a sentence can help with this.
- Not all academic essays will be argumentative essays. Some may require you to describe something. In descriptive essays you may not be required to state your position. Always read your assessment outlines carefully and check with your tutor if you are unsure.