Most formal, academic essays must include a thesis statement, which is a one (or two) sentence summary of a paper's purpose or point, and which usually exists as the last sentence in the introduction. A thesis statement lets your reader know early on exactly what your essay is going to be about, and it also keeps you focused on your essay's main point.

A thesis statement should be *very clear* as it announces your topic and your point, and limited in scope, so that writing your essay is a managed task. Most often, thesis statements will be either *argumentative* or *explanatory* in nature.

**Crafting the Thesis Statement**

**A good thesis is restricted, almost bite-sized.**

- The world is a terrible mess. vs. Trade barriers contribute to international tensions.
- Old age has many difficulties. vs. The worst part of being old is the loneliness.
- Crime must be stopped. vs. Our courts should hand out tougher sentences.

**A good thesis is concise.**

- Arizona's new health program is excellent, but it has several drawbacks, and it should be run only on an experimental basis for two or three years. vs. Arizona's new health program has several drawbacks.

**A good thesis is specific, not vague.**

- Hemingway's war stories are really good. vs. Hemingway's war stories helped to create a new prose style.

**A thesis is not a title.**
The Decline of Baseball vs. In recent years, baseball has experienced a significant decline in popularity.

Inflation and Old Age vs. Continuing inflation makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.

A thesis is not an announcement of the subject.

My subject is the incompetence of Professor Doolittle. vs. Professor Doolittle is incompetent at teaching and researching.

I want to share some thoughts with you about our space program vs. Our space program is a waste of money.

A thesis is not a statement of absolute fact.

The capital of California is Sacramento. vs. Sacramento is a great place to live.

Jane Austen is the author of *Pride and Prejudice*. vs. *Pride and Prejudice* is boring.