

EXERCISE SHEET: THESIS STATEMENTS

Your *thesis statement* is the point you are trying to prove or argue in your paper. A thesis statement is made up of a **claim** and an **organizing principle**. The claim is the point you are trying to prove in your paper; it should be your answer to the assignment's prompt. The **organizing principle** is a list of reasons that supports the thesis statement's **claim**.

Many writers put their thesis statements at the end of their introductory paragraphs. This is great for organization!

FORMULATING THESIS STATEMENTS

1. **Research your topic** - Do some research before you begin writing your thesis statement. Many assignment prompts can be answered in different ways. By researching beforehand, you can find the best or most interesting response to the prompt.
2. **Develop your claim** - Your claim should be a defensible statement that answers the assignment prompt. Make sure that your claim is not too broad or too narrow for your assignment.
3. **Develop your organizing principle** - Your organizing principle should be made up of multiple supporting reasons, which will later be defended with evidence from research sources (e.g., examples, statistics, expert opinion) throughout your body paragraphs. Ensure you can discuss each of these points thoroughly in the word count of your paper. Most thesis statements will have three points in the organizing principle; however, this may differ based on the assignment prompt.

EXAMPLE

Your assignment prompt is: **Compare and contrast waffles and pancakes.**

1. **Research the topic** - Based on your findings, you could write about the following questions:
 - a. Are pancakes or waffles more nutritious?
 - b. Do consumers prefer waffles or pancakes?
 - c. Are pancakes or waffles more economical to make?
2. **Develop your claim** - You choose to address the question, "Do consumers prefer waffles or pancakes?" Based on the research, you found that consumers, on average, prefer waffles over pancakes. You write down the claim, "**Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes.**"
3. **Develop your organizing principle** - In your research of the topic, you found that your claim is supported by three points: **density, texture, and flavor.**
4. **Combine your claim and organizing principle** - **Consumers prefer waffles to pancakes** because of their **density, texture, and flavor.**

EXERCISE: IDENTIFY ISSUES IN THESIS STATEMENTS

Examine each of these possible thesis statements. Point out any problems with them, and suggest possible revisions.

1. I enjoyed reading Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* because of his teachings on virtue, pleasure, and friendship.
2. Scientists have found a strong link between procrastination and stress.
3. This paper will explain the benefits and side effects of drinking coffee daily.
4. C. S. Lewis was a good Christian theologian.
5. School children should get longer recesses to reduce stress.

EXERCISE: WRITING THESIS STATEMENTS

From the given information, write research questions, make up points of the research, and formulate thesis statements that have strong claims and organizing principles.

1. Assignment Prompt: Compare and contrast tea and coffee.
 - a. Research question: Is tea healthier to drink than coffee?
 - b. Points of research
 - i. Lower caffeine content
 - ii. Added sugar in coffee drinks
 - iii. Different nutrients
 - c. Thesis Statement: _____

2. Assignment Prompt: Discuss the benefits of daily reading on the brain.
 - a. Research question: Can daily reading promote memory retention in adults?
 - b. Points of research
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
 - c. Thesis Statement: _____

3. Assignment Prompt: Discuss the effects that a prominent theologian had on Christianity.
 - a. Research question: _____
 - b. Points of research
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
 - c. Thesis Statement: _____
