

Help Centres – English Support



Thesis Statement, Preview Statement & Topic Sentence

1. What is a thesis statement?

- gives the main idea of the essay
- is one sentence
- appears at the end of the introductory paragraph in an essay

*Note that a thesis statement is not simply a statement of fact.

Weak Thesis Statement: “There are different kinds of weather”. (*Everyone knows that there are different kinds of weather.*)

Strong Thesis Statement: “As a result of climate change, weather is having negative social and economic impacts on people around the world.” (*The essay would go on to describe these impacts and explain why they are important.*)

How is a thesis statement different from a topic?

A thesis statement is not the same as a topic. A **topic** is a word or phrase that is not a complete thought. A **thesis statement is a complete thought about the topic.**

Example: if the *topic* is “dogs,” a *thesis statement* could be “Dogs make excellent pets.”

2. What is a preview statement?

- mentions the supporting points in the essay
- tells reader what the body paragraphs will contain
- also called a PATH statement, preview statement, or preview of main points

Example: Here’s an example of a thesis statement that includes the preview of main points. The thesis part is in *italics*, and the preview of main points is underlined:

“Dogs make excellent pets because they provide companionship, protection, and exercise.”

The thesis statement and preview statement can also be two separate sentences:

"Dogs make excellent pets. They provide companionship, protection, and exercise."

Based on the thesis statement and preview statement above, the reader knows that:

- the entire essay will argue that dogs make excellent pets
- body paragraph 1 will talk about how the companionship dogs provide makes them excellent pets
- body paragraph 2 will talk about how the protection dogs provide makes them excellent pets
- body paragraph 3 will talk about how the exercise dogs provide makes them excellent pets

3. What is a topic sentence?

- gives the main idea of each body paragraph
- refers to and supports the thesis statement

Example: Here are some possible topic sentences for each main point from the preview statement.

Body paragraph 1 topic sentence: "Dogs make excellent pets because of the companionship they provide."

Body paragraph 2 topic sentence: "The protection dogs provide also makes them excellent pets."

Body paragraph 3 topic sentence: "The exercise dogs need can benefit their owners, as well."

Practice

Exercise. Answer the questions that follow this sample thesis + preview statement:

"My partner and I decided that a move to the city would be good for our family because of better opportunities for employment, education, and culture."

1. Highlight the thesis in yellow.
2. Highlight the preview of main points in blue.
3. What will the first body paragraph talk about? Write a topic sentence for it.
4. What will the second body paragraph talk about? Write a topic sentence for it.
5. What will the third body paragraph talk about? Write a topic sentence for it.