

Help Centres – English Support



Thesis Statements: Common Problems

You are now familiar with thesis statements. However, are you aware of some of the most common problems plaguing thesis statements?

This handout aims to illustrate what to avoid in thesis statements so that your own will be clearer, stronger and more accurate.

1. Excessively Long and Confusing

A rambling thesis statement confuses the reader and weakens the argument of the essay.

Example: *While the consumption of sugary drinks, like Coca-Cola, during infrequent occasions, such as birthday parties and beach picnics, is understandable, their ingestion by children still needs to be strictly controlled and reduced by parents because excessive use leads to terrible consequences, the top three being tooth decay, weight gain, and diabetes*

Improved: *While harmless in moderation, parents should still control their children's consumption of sugary drinks since frequent indulgence leads to tooth decay, obesity, and the development of childhood diabetes.*

2. General and Vague

Some thesis statements fail to present a clear argument, or position, on an issue, and only introduce the general topic of the essay through vague language.

Example: *Young students should not use social media because of its many negative effects.*

Improved: *Due to its detrimental effects on attention spans, relationships, and self-image, parents and schools should actively discourage young students from using social media.*

3. Too obvious or non-controversial

Thesis statements that merely repeat accepted truths without presenting new insights or arguments are weak and uninteresting.

Example: *This essay will examine the importance of regular sleep.*

Improved: *Maintaining regular sleep patterns improves not only physical stamina but also strengthens a person's creative powers.*

4. No clear purpose or goal

A thesis statement that presents a fact or personal opinion will fail to convince the reader of any benefits in completing a review of the essay.

Example: *I think curling is the greatest sport in the country!*

Improved: *When considering its relative physical safety, absence of violence, and demands on strategic thinking, it is not difficult to argue that curling is one of the country's greatest sports.*

5. Unrelated to body paragraphs

Even though you might have a clear and concise thesis statement, your overall efforts will fail if the body paragraphs do not develop the argument presented at the end of the introduction. **Remember:** each topic sentence – and supporting sentences -- must relate back to the thesis statement.