

Help Centres – English Support



Thesis Statement, Preview Statement & Topic Sentence

What is a thesis statement?

A **thesis statement**:

- gives the main idea of the essay
- is usually one to two sentences (depending on essay length and complexity)
- appears at the end of the introductory paragraph in an essay

Note that a thesis statement is not simply a statement of fact. For example, “There are different kinds of weather” is not a good thesis statement. Everyone knows that there are different kinds of weather.

Instead, a thesis statement makes a claim, such as “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.**

For example, if the topic is “dogs,” a thesis statement could be “Dogs make excellent pets.”

Preview statements

At the end of the introduction, some writers mention the supporting points in the essay. This information is like a road map for readers, telling them what the body paragraphs will contain. It is also called a PATH statement, preview statement, or preview of main points. (Some people consider this information to simply be part of the thesis statement.)

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

- “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

Topic sentences

While the thesis statement gives the main idea of the entire essay, the topic sentences give the main idea of each body paragraph. Each topic sentence should also refer to the thesis statement. Here are topic sentences for the example above:

- **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.

Notice that each topic sentence does two things:

1. It gives the main idea of the paragraph.
2. It supports the thesis.

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. Underline the thesis.
2. Italicize the preview of the main points.
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.

Answers.

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.*

3. Sample topic sentence for body paragraph 1: *One of the reasons my family decided to move to the city was the better employment opportunities there.*
4. Sample topic sentence for body paragraph 2: *Better educational opportunities **also** led to our move to the city.*
5. Sample topic sentence for body paragraph 3: ***In addition to better employment and educational opportunities**, living in the city would offer greater access to cultural events.*

In the sample topic sentences above, the words **in bold** function as transition between paragraphs, helping to show how the ideas are connected.

More help

If you are a Camosun student and would like help understanding these answers, please feel free to book an appointment with a writing consultant:

Make an Appointment - <https://camosun.ca/services/academic-supports/help-centres>