How do I write a thesis statement?

Fundamentals of Academic Writing

Review

- A thesis statement
  - is a statement
  - makes an objective claim (usually)
  - is not trivial; can be debated
  - is specific enough to treat completely

- Generally an "answer" to the research question

A thesis statement is

- a statement telling your reader what you discovered or what your research is about.
  - Factual
  - Objective
  - Non-trivial
  - Specific

*The incorporation of new – especially borrowed – elements into existing rituals presents a problem for symbolic analysis: if the additions are to be understood as meaningful rather than random, it must be shown that the incorporated element has been coherently integrated into the already existing system of symbolic meaning. In order to understand one example of a borrowed element, the **Western-style wedding cake in modern Japanese weddings**, this paper begins with an examination of the symbolic distinctions operative in a variety of contexts in Japanese culture. It concludes that **the cake can be seen as coherently integrated** in terms of these distinctions **into the wedding ritual, as a symbol of fertility.*** (Edwards 1982)

Using the thesis statement

- "Normally, if an academic writer is very clear about his or her research, he or she should be able to state the central research idea in just one sentence. Thus, if the writer cannot state the central research idea in just one sentence, he or she is not very clear about his or her research" (Lai 2011).

When do I write one?

- While researching

  or

- After researching

- Before writing the paper

- And maybe again after the paper

Why do I write one?

- Clarify your thinking

- Guide your writing

- Explain your paper to others

How do I write one?

- Various strategies…

- Lai's "recipe approach"

Thesis recipe

1. Key word to describe your main topic

TOEFL reading comprehension test

Thesis recipe

2. Add a verb or predicate

TOEFL reading comprehension test evaluates students' study skills.

Thesis recipe

3. Turn the sentence into a question

Which study skills does the TOEFL reading comp. test evaluate?

Thesis recipe

4. Answer the question

TOEFL r.c. test evaluates global comprehension, ability to quickly locate specific information, word recognition, and ability to resolve anaphoric reference. It does not test intelligence, listening comprehension, or reading strategies.

Thesis recipe

5. Summarize the answer in one sentence

TOEFL reading comprehension test evaluates decoding and comprehension skills but not learning strategies.

Thesis recipe

6. Clear relationship between subject and predicate

TOEFL scores are positively correlated with decoding and comprehension skills measured by other tests, but not learning strategies observed in the classroom.

Thesis recipe

7. Remove ambiguity

Students' scores on TOEFL reading comprehension tests are positively correlated with ability to decode word and sentence meaning, and with measures of global comprehension, but not with any specific learning strategies observed in the classroom.

Try it!

1. Keyword to describe your main idea
2. Add a verb or predicate.
3. Turn the sentence into a question.
4. Answer the question.
5. Summarize the answer in one sentence.
6. Clear relation between subject, predicate
7. Remove ambiguities.

Evaluate your thesis

- Unified – one topic

- Focused – single argument; complete answer

- Clear – avoid abstract, ambiguous words

- Original

    but also

- Relevant to your field

Thesis recipe

1. Key word to describe your main topic

2. Add a verb or predicate

3. Turn the sentence into a question

4. Answer the question

5. Summarize the answer in one sentence

6. Clarify relationship between subject and predicate

7. Remove ambiguity