

STETSON UNIVERSITY

Writing Center Handouts

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is one to two sentences in the introduction of your paper that outlines what your paper is all about. It should clearly propose an answer to a prompt or question and help your stance, let the reader know what to expect, and serve as an outline to follow as you write.

Most thesis statements follow a general format to best communicate the topic of your paper. For a strong thesis statement, it is important to address the what, the stance, and the why.

The What

- This is where you define the prompt or question you are responding to.
- Make sure to clearly identify what the topic of your paper is.
- *Helpful Tip: Oftentimes, defining “the what” of your thesis could be as simple as restating the prompt you were given.*

For example: Medical marijuana must be legalized for its medicinal properties, and its implications to our legal system and economy.

The Stance

- This is your position on your topic, your argument, or what you will prove.
- It should clearly state the purpose of your paper.
- *Helpful Tip: Your stance, opinion, or response to the prompt will often come directly after “the what.”*

For example: Medical marijuana must be legalized for its medicinal properties, and its implications to our legal system and economy.

The Why

- This is the significance of your argument, why you have chosen your position, how you will prove it, or what supporting evidence will be shown.
- This can work as an outline for what your body paragraphs will discuss.
- Include the general evidence or concepts in the order that you will write about them in your body paragraphs.

For example: Medical marijuana must be legalized for its medicinal properties, and its implications to our legal system and economy.

Important Reminders:

- Consider the type of paper assigned and any specific advice about how your professor may prefer thesis statements. Be sure you are answering the prompt.
- Constantly refer back to your thesis statement when writing to make sure that you are not straying from the topic of your paper.