What is a thesis statement?

Developing Academic Writing

What is a thesis statement

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

- Generally an "answer" to a 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

A thesis statement is factual.

- Hello.

- What did you eat for lunch today?

- Rye bread is good for lunch.

A thesis statement is objective.

- Rye bread is good for lunch.

- Danish people think that rye bread is good for your health.

- Copenhagen schools serve rye bread for lunch.

A thesis statement is non-trivial.

- Copenhagen schools serve rye bread for lunch.

- The 22 students at Kost nursery school ate fruit and vegetables with rye bread, leftover pasta, or leftover rice for lunch.

- Danish teachers value rye bread differently from other foods.

A thesis statement is specific.

- Danish teachers value rye bread differently from other foods.

- Danish teachers view rye bread as a typical 'healthy' food.

- Danish teachers treat traditional food items, such as rye bread, as superior to other foods that minority children regularly bring.

Much socialization of children into healthy food practices takes place in the education system. However, teachers' understandings of healthy food may differ from those of students and parents. Furthermore, health is connected to respectability. Thus, food socialization concerns more than nutritional values. This study examines lunchtime interactions between minority students and majority teachers **in a Danish classroom**. **I show that certain traditional items (rye bread) are treated as superior to certain others that minority children regularly bring**. *Children are accountable for lunch boxes, and cultural and personal preferences are disregarded if at odds with dominant understandings of healthy food.* (Karrebaek 2012)

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 comprehension 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 other test scores for global comprehension and ability to decode word or sentence meaning, but do not correlate with classroom observations of learning strategies.

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