

# THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# Thesis Statement

---

All academic papers need to have a thesis. The **thesis** is simply the point of the paper; it is the overall message the paper intends to communicate.

## Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is the single sentence that you could read to tell someone the point or central message of your essay.

Example: “Creamy peanut butter is better than crunchy peanut butter.”

The entire essay is focused on that claim and will go on to offer a logical defense of the claim. That is to say, the paper’s **topic** is the debate (creamy vs. crunchy) and the **thesis** is the side of that debate the paper takes (creamy is better). The entire point of the paper (the thesis) can be summarized in that statement.

## Placement

The most common place to offer a thesis statement is in the introduction, generally at the end of that paragraph. By placing the thesis statement near the beginning of the paper, you can make the purpose of your paper clear from the start.

## Strategies Concerning Thesis Statements

### Development

The particular wording of a thesis statement may be determined during various stages of the writing process. Sometimes, the thesis statement can be the starting point for the first draft of an essay; other times, the thesis statement may come to you only after you have written out a draft.

In any case, the thesis statement should always be subject to revision. On the back of this handout, there are characteristics of a solid thesis statement.

### Expansion

Since thesis statements help the reader understand precisely what the paper will attempt to communicate, it can be beneficial to include within the thesis statement a preview of the paper’s supporting points. In other words, the essay will provide a series of paragraphs to support the claim made in the thesis statement, and the topics of these paragraphs can be briefly captured in the thesis statement.

Example: *“Because pieces of peanut can make spreading more difficult and because even those who prefer crunchy can accept creamy, whereas the reverse is not as common, creamy peanut butter is better than crunchy peanut butter.”*

This sentence begins with two supporting arguments: (a) “pieces of peanut can make spreading more difficult” and (b) “even those who prefer crunchy can accept creamy.” The sentence then states the claim that (a) and (b) support: → “creamy peanut butter is better than crunchy peanut butter.”

### **A Thesis Statement Should Be:**

#### **Concise**

You want to use only as many words as it takes to communicate your paper’s central point. In the following sentence, much of the information is unnecessary.

Example of what NOT to do: *“Crunchy peanut butter has pieces of peanut in it and can be found at the supermarket alongside creamy peanut butter, which is the kind of peanut butter that is better than crunchy peanut butter.”*

Informing the reader that the two varieties can be found near each other is not crucial information for the communication of the paper’s thesis. What is important is that creamy is better and why.

#### **Clear**

The grammatical correctness and precision of your thesis statement can go a long way toward anchoring your essay’s material to a central meaning. The following sentence fails to function articulately.

Example of what NOT to do: *“Even as the epitome of food in the world today is to eat or to even to crunch on something, a peanut butter without is with better than it with peanuts in it.”*

However well intentioned this sentence may be, it simply does not communicate.

#### **Complete**

You should make the point of your paper obvious within the statement. The following sentence misguidedly tries to set up a mystery.

Example of what NOT to do: *“When it comes to crunchy peanut butter and creamy peanut butter, one is better than the other.”*

Discussion: While it does present the debate, this sentence does not clearly indicate what the purpose of the paper will be. The purpose is not to document the debate or even to explain *that* one is better; the purpose is to argue *which* one is better.