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SSC - 245

What is a Thesis Statement?

Introduction

Writing in college often takes the form of persuasion—convincing others that you have an interesting, logical point of view on the subject you are studying. Persuasion is a skill you practice regularly in your daily life. You persuade your roommate to clean up, your parents to let you borrow the car, your friend to vote for your favorite candidate or policy. In college, and especially in a timed writing situation such as the GPE, essay prompts often ask you to make a persuasive case. You are asked to convince your reader of your point of view. This form of persuasion, often called academic argument, follows a predictable pattern in writing: **after a brief introduction of your topic, you state your point of view on the topic directly, often in one sentence.** This sentence is the thesis statement, and it serves as a summary of the argument you'll make in the rest of your paper.

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement:

- tells the reader how you will interpret an essay prompt.
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
- directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be *World War II* or *Moby Dick*; a thesis must then offer a specific perspective on the war or the novel.
- makes a claim that others might dispute.
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, presents and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.