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Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement articulates the unifying theme of an academic paper. It may present an argument or opinion, describe an idea, or provoke an analysis. Different disciplines and types of essays require varied forms of thesis statements. Reading example essays can provide a sense of what is expected in a specific paper.

Creating the thesis statement

- In point form write the topic and main ideas of your paper
- Free-write the most important conclusion or thought you have about your paper
- Try to make connections between the points and highlight implications, causes or applications; answer the question: "Why did you write this essay?"
- Combine the above ideas into one or a few sentences

Why the thesis statement is so important

A primary goal of academic writing is the communication of ideas to contribute to a growing body of knowledge. Because a thesis statement clearly defines what the essay is about, it guides the reader through the expression of ideas in order to help make sense of what the writer is saying (Waddell, 2004; Writing Tutorial Services, 2004). Without the thesis statement, it is likely that the writer will meander through disconnected thoughts and will lose the reader. The more precise the thesis statement is, the more likely the writing that supports it will be clear and organized. Sometimes the thesis statement needs to be rewritten as the essay evolves, as the original ideas have changed (Karper, 2002; Waddell).

Example Thesis Statements

Research paper topic: How to write an academic paper (description)

Thesis Statement	Stronger Thesis Statement
There are many things a writer needs to know to write a good university paper. This paper will discuss the writing process and research tips as being key to producing a good essay.	An academic paper requires organization, adequate research or attention to subject matter, and expression in conventional English; however, without the author's deep understanding of the topic, the essay falls flat.

The first example tells what the paper will be about in general terms; we know that the writer will discuss the writing process and research tips. However, the word choice is weak. The use of specific words would better set a tone and focus the essay.

The second, stronger example specifically states the requirements for writing a paper, and attaches importance to one particular requirement, thus focusing the reader on what the author feels is essential.

For an argumentative paper, you will be making a claim for specific reasons that are supported with your

Course & Content: WR4.41

A Sample Essay

Read the entire essay about the power of fiction – a poem and a short story. Read the essay and identify the following parts:

1. The introduction
2. The body paragraphs
3. The conclusion
4. The thesis statement
5. The location of the main subject by subject ID point by point
6. The author does not use transition
7. The location of each subject point
8. The location of each body paragraph

Multiple Themes and Relationships

Being able to identify multiple themes and relationships in an essay is a skill that is essential to success in many college courses. This skill is also essential to success in many careers. This skill is also essential to success in many careers.

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Rhetorical precis sample. Rhetorical precis paragraph. Rhetorical precis essay example. Rhetorical precis example.

When you read actively, you can't just flip pages and daydream about tomorrow's plans. Unless it's a newspaper, magazine, or time-sensitive online article, usually just the year will suffice. Second Sentence: How? Grose continues by discussing some of the reasons that men do not contribute to cleaning: the praise for a clean house goes to the woman; advertising and media praise men's cooking and childcare, but not cleaning; and lastly, it is just not fun. [Comment: In the later third of this essay, Cronon uses the pronoun "we" to identify himself and his assumed readership. Is this a scholar? You thoroughly loosen it in order to understand it better. Is he a public intellectual? Have they employed similar methods to arrive at their arguments? How is the case built? What is different about their intended audiences? When you've read a text well, you can then discuss it in class, think critically about it, incorporate it into your writing, consider it in light of other texts, and advance or push against its ideas. he will admit that he's never cleaned the bathroom, that I do the dishes nine times out of ten, and that he barely knows how the washer and dryer work in the apartment we've lived in for over eight months. "10 These facts introduce and support the idea that Grose does more household chores than her husband. An Annotated Sample of a Rhetorical Précis Take a look at this annotated précis of William Cronon's 1995 article "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." It closely follows the précis structure outlined above. Use an "in order to" phrase in this sentence to very clearly indicate the purpose. Is to write a summary of it. They summarize and critique published articles, evaluate papers' arguments, and reflect on essays. Grose continues with many statistics: [A]bout 55 percent of American mothers employed full time do some housework on an average day, while only 18 percent of employed fathers do. Look back at that rhetorical précis and ask yourself questions like these, or other questions that connect what you know and have experienced with the text you have read: What else have you read or experienced that furthers or complicates the argument made by this text? Even in the famously gender-neutral Sweden, women do 45 minutes more housework a day than their male partners.11 These statistics are a few of many that logically support her claim that it is a substantial and real problem that men do not do their fair share of the chores. Start by identifying the author and offering any information that might help clarify who this person is in relation to this text. The New Republic, 19 Mar. [Comment: One of the challenges of the second sentence is to decide what not to include. So, give yourself the time you need to read carefully, think deeply, and analyze effectively. What kind of evidence does the article draw upon? Take notes about the text's key ideas and your responses to those ideas. Why do you have a particular opinion or response towards this piece of writing? Specifically, we recommend that you use your reading to generate a rhetorical précis. In the first sentence, you told us what that author is arguing; now it is time to consider why the author has done all of this. This sentence should account for all the most important moves made across this piece. 156-64. Conclusion In order to analyze a text, you need to understand key elements of it. The third sentence explains why the author wrote this, her purpose or intended effect. Précis writing prepares you to discuss a text and sets you up for that important next step: analysis. Pay attention to the language used in this piece and how much background the writer provides. What was the purpose of this text? Often authors aren't this useful in helping to identify an audience.] Using a Rhetorical Précis to Guide Analysis Writing a good précis is a lot of work. Possible solutions to the problem, Grose suggests, include making a chart of who does which chores, dividing up tasks based on skill and ability, accepting a dirtier home, and making cleaning more fun with gadgets.5 Throughout her piece, Grose uses many strong sources that strengthen her credibility and appeal to ethos, as well as build her argument.6 These sources include, "sociologists Judith Treas and Tsui-o Tai," "a 2008 study from the University of New Hampshire," and "P&G North America Fabric Care Brand Manager, Matthew Krebbiel" (qtd. Explain it as necessary. "Cleaning: The Final Feminist Frontier." New Republic. Where does the logic of the argument and its supporting evidence cohere or fall apart? We believe two productive strategies for approaching this kind of reading and analysis are active reading and rhetorical précis writing. However, even if you aren't required to write a précis for a class, writing one can help you in a number of ways. Are they using the same kind of structure to develop those arguments? Perhaps by comparing and contrasting, illustrating, defining, or providing context? How do you see that these ideas fit into the larger context of what you've been studying in this course? Writing a précis guides your reading and directs your attention to the key aspects of a text. Depending on the text and your preferences, these notes could be made on your copy of the text or article or in a separate place. For example, the author may suggest, argue, analyze, imply, urge, contrast, or claim something. In this case, more could be said about what those paradoxes and detriments are, but since the focus here is on the "how" instead of the "what," they have been left out. I bet my husband would buy one "20 Retiring to her own marriage and husband is an appeal to logos or personal credibility, and while that works well in the introduction. In the conclusion, it lacks the strength and seriousness that the topic deserves and was given earlier in the article.21 Though Grose begins the essay by effectively persuading her readers of the unfair distribution of home-maintenance cleaning labor, she loses her power in the end, where she most needs to drive home her argument. Then look at each précis side-by-side and ask yourself about how a sentence in one précis relates to the corresponding sentence in the other précis. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." Environmental History, vol. Does it appear in the leisure section of a local newspaper? Does the piece achieve what the author intended? Notes Hook Context Article author's claim or purpose Thesis Summary of the article's main point in the second paragraph (could also be in the introduction) Third paragraph begins with a transition and topic sentence that reflects the first topic in the thesis Quotes illustrate how the author uses appeals to ethos Analysis explains how the quotes show the effective use of ethos as noted in the thesis Transition and topic sentence about the second point from the thesis Quote that illustrates appeals to logos Quote that illustrates appeals to Logos Analysis explains how the quotes show the effective use of logos, as noted in the thesis Transition and topic sentence about the third point from the thesis Quotes that illustrate appeals to pathos Analysis explains how the quotes show the effective use of pathos, as noted in the thesis Transition and topic sentence about fourth point from the thesis Quote illustrates how the author uses appeal to ethos Analysis explains how quote supports thesis Conclusion returns to the ideas in the thesis and further develops them Last sentence returns to the hook in the introduction Learn more about the "Rhetorical Analysis Graphic Organizer." Learn more about "Pathos, Logos, and Ethos." Download this Handout PDF Academic writers across all disciplines analyze texts. It takes dedicated time and consideration. Active Reading Active reading requires you to slow your reading down, engage more intentionally with the text, think about it, and focus your attention on its ideas. Fourth Sentence: For Whom? Is one more or less successful or persuasive than the other? 7–28. But, it can be useful in and of itself and productive in the development of additional academic writing. In addition to these strategies, we firmly believe that one of the best ways to understand a book, article, essay, blog post, etc. If those kinds of unidentified details are important enough, there is room to mention them more thoroughly in the third sentence.] Cronon opposes the perspective of wilderness as an idealized, non-human space in order to persuade his readers to live rightly in relationship to nature and embrace the reality that "home" as a welcoming, responsibility-requiring place encompasses both "wilderness" and "civilization." [Comment: Often there is more than one "why," so be on the look out for this as you actively read.] According to his specific identification, scholarly presentation, and publication venue, Cronon's primary audience includes American environmentalist academics. In the final sentence, identify the author's intended audience and offer some rationale for how you know that to be the audience. How well is the author's argument developed and clarified through the structure of the text? Analysis of nonfiction texts can take several forms, but three common ones are: evaluation and critique, comparison, and reflection. In order to make this part particularly precise, use a rhetorically strong verb to describe the author's claim. Web. What does the writer assume readers believe, know, or value? Harriet Clark Ms. Rebecca Winter CWC 101 13 Feb. In this sentence, provide a very condensed outline of how the author develops, structures, and supports the argument. Add the date in parentheses after the title of the text. When you write a précis you have to exactly and succinctly account for the most important parts of a text. Let what you identify as being similar and different about these texts guide your comparative analysis. Identifying the audience helps you consider how rhetorically effective this text is. Start by writing a précis for each piece you have to compare. Introduction to the Rhetorical Précis "Précis" is French for "specific" or "precise." It's also a particular kind of writing. The second sentence explores how the text is developed and organized. In a way, a reflective analysis is kind of like a comparative analysis where the second text is you. Do a quick internet search. Of course, the most obvious application of a précis is connected to its function as a summary. Do the author's background, tone, evidence, and assumptions foster credibility? ... Sometimes rhetorical précis writing is a course requirement. Third Sentence: Why? Comparison Through comparison, you bring together an analysis of more than one text. A rhetorical précis can even help you structure your annotated bibliography annotations or provide you with summary sentences to include in a paper as you account for your sources. Notes will help you remember and process what the text is about and what you think about it. Sometimes the title of the journal is self-explanatory, but at other times it's unfamiliar or not clearly connected to a specific discipline. Look back at the publication and think about who is likely to read this kind of magazine, journal, or book. In this kind of writing, you get to talk about yourself. This damages the strength of her credibility and her argument.18 Additionally, her last statement in the article refers to her husband in a way that weakens the argument.19 While returning to the introduction's hook in the conclusion is a frequently-used strategy, Grose chooses to return to her discussion of her husband in a humorous way: Grose discusses solutions, and says there is "a huge, untapped market ... This page is about how you can read and analyze nonfiction texts. Is she a public official or a prominent blogger? In academic writing, we summarize sources all the time. Closely reading that text and summarizing it through a rhetorical précis can help you understand it better. Reflection Reflection provides you with space to analyze a text in light of your experiences, perspectives, and ideas. The fourth and final sentence describes the "for whom" of the text by clarifying who the intended or assumed audience of this text is. Let's look more closely at those four parts. Another feeling Grose reinforces with her word choice is the concept of fairness: "fair share," "a week and a half more of 'second shift' work," "more housework," "more gendered and less frequent." These words help establish the unfairness that exists when women do all of the cleaning, and they are an appeal to pathos, or the readers' feelings of frustration and anger with injustice.15 However, the end of the article lacks the same level of effectiveness in the appeals to ethos.16 For example, Grose notes that when men do housework, they are considered to be "enacting "small instances of gender heroism," or "SIGH'S"—which, barf."17 The usage of the word "barf" is jarring to the reader; unprofessional and immature, it is a shift from the researched, intelligent voice she has established and the reader is less likely to take the author seriously. A spokesperson? Evaluation and Critique Evaluating a text requires you to use your analysis to consider and critique the strengths and weaknesses of that piece of writing. Make sure that you are looking deeply at how and why various elements of the text and its argument succeed or falter. 1. pp. Readers can see the problem exists in both her marriage and throughout the world; however, her shift to humor and sarcasm makes the reader not take the problem as seriously in the end.22 Grose could have more seriously driven home the point that a woman's work could be done; by a man.23 Works Cited Grose, Jessica. Here are some questions to guide your thinking: Are all texts addressing a parallel idea? Look to see how long it is, where it's published, how it may be divided into sections, what kind of works cited list it has, whether there are appendices, etc. Adding to this idea are words and phrases such as, "insisted," "argued," "not fun," "sucks" "headachey," "be judged," "be shunned" (Grose). If so, what is her field? Some précis are longer or shorter than others. A reporter? Next up, the publication. Are they making similar or different arguments? If you write a successful précis, it is a good indication that you've read that text closely and that you understand its major moves and arguments. in Grose.)7 Citing these sources boosts Grose's credibility by showing that she has done her homework and has provided facts and statistics, as well as expert opinions to support her claim. Works Cited Cronon, William. "The Rhetorical Précis." Rhetoric Review, vol. for toilet-scrubbing iPods. 7, no. What is its title? 2014. Is it a book in a series or an article in a special collection? The details and numbers build an appeal to logos and impress upon the reader that this is a problem worth discussing.12 Along with strong logos appeals, Grose effectively makes appeals to pathos in the beginning and middle sections.13 Her introduction is full of emotionally-charged words and phrases that create a sympathetic image; Grose notes that she "was eight months pregnant" and her husband found it difficult to "fight with a massively pregnant person."14 The image she evokes of the challenges and vulnerabilities of being so pregnant, as well as the high emotions a woman feels at that time effectively introduce the argument and its seriousness. 28 Mar. Once you have written a précis, you can incorporate some of its sentences or ideas into your writing when you need to quickly account for a text's argument, content, or purpose. Make sure that you are connecting your assertions about what works and doesn't work in this text to the author, the argument's development and purpose, and the audience. Disclaimer: There are different kinds of précis for different contexts. She also uses personal examples from her own home life to introduce and support the issue, which shows that she has a personal stake in and first-hand experience with the problem.8 Adding to her ethos appeals, Grose uses strong appeals to logos, with many facts and statistics and logical progressions of ideas.9 She points out facts about her marriage and the distribution of household chores: "My husband and I both work. Locate a bio in the journal or the book cover. When you've used a précis to lay out the primary elements of this text (the author; the argument's what, how, and why; and the audience) in front of you, you're ready to move on with your analysis. Perhaps the text starts out with a narrative and then moves into a description of several research studies? 1, no. A legal précis is different from what we're talking about here. First Sentence: Who, Where, When, and What? In large part, the quality of your analysis will be dependent on the quality of your comprehension. 2015 Not Quite a Clean Sweep: Rhetorical Strategies in Grose's "Cleaning: The Final Feminist Frontier" A woman's work is never done: many American women grow up with this saying and feel it to be true.1 One such woman, author Jessica Grose, wrote "Cleaning: The Final Feminist Frontier," published in 2013 in the New Republic.2 and she argues that while the men recently started taking on more of the childcare and cooking, cleaning still falls unfairly on women.3 Grose begins building her credibility with personal facts and statistics, and successfully employing emotional appeals; however, toward the end of the article, her attempts to appeal to readers' emotions weaken her credibility and ultimately, her argument.4 In her article, Grose first sets the stage by describing a specific scenario of house-cleaning with her husband after being shut in during Hurricane Sandy, and then she outlines the uneven distribution of cleaning work in her marriage and draws a comparison to the larger feminist issue of who does the cleaning in a relationship. What does the writer want the reader to do, believe, feel, or think about all this? Etymologically, "analysis" comes from the Ancient Greek terms for "throughout" and "loosening." When you analyze something, you deconstruct it, extract its parts, peer inside to see how everything fits together. All of these words evoke negative emotions about cleaning, which makes the reader sympathize with women who feel "judged" and "shunned"—very negative feelings. But a rhetorical précis is even more powerfully useful for writing analysis. In order to do these things, they have to read complex texts carefully and understand them clearly. Woodworth, Margaret K. Figuring out who the writer is will help you understand some of the texts' context. In "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (1995), the opening essay of the edited collection Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, renowned environmental historian William Cronon [Comment: The information about who Cronon is was very easily located at the end of the article and through a quick internet search.] critiques the romantic idealization of supposedly untouched, vast wilderness and argues that such a perspective of wilderness negatively affects humankind's relationship with nature. Parts of a Rhetorical Précis A rhetorical précis, as developed by Margaret K. The first sentence identifies who wrote the text, where and when it was published, and what its topic and claim are. If you are writing a précis as a course assignment, be sure to follow your instructor's guidance on what this should consist of and how it should be formatted. Moving forward, how can this text, its argument, or its presentation be influential in shaping your thinking or research? Cronon builds a historical case for wilderness as a human construct, explores the cultural and literary foundations for the belief that wilderness is a sublime frontier, identifies the problematic paradoxes inherent in this belief, and outlines the detriments of and possible paradigm-shifting solutions to this environmental problem. 2013. Much has been written about active reading, but generally we recommend that when you read you Skim over the text before reading it. The rest of the sentence should be about the article's topic—what it is about. Her goal is to make the reader feel sympathy for her. [Working women with children are still doing a week and a half more of "second shift" work each year than their male partners. Writing a précis is an excellent way to show that you've closely read a text. Use the title to help you predict what the text is about and what it argues. Look back at the argument and audience and ask yourself some of these questions: Is this a persuasive argument for this group of readers? Detailed answers—with examples—to any of these or similar questions could generate enough material for a close, analytical evaluation. Has he written other stuff? Woodworth and described in her 1988 article "The Rhetorical Précis" (published by Rhetoric Review), consists of four dense but direct sentences. This page provides a guide to these strategies and practical ways to help you evaluate, compare, and reflect upon nonfiction texts. We split midnight baby feedings ...but ... This overview will help you to understand the context, genre, and purpose of this piece as well as help you gauge how long it will take you to read it and how it might be relevant to your class, paper, or project.

