

# HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT

**What is a thesis statement?** A thesis statement is one to two sentences in the introduction of an essay that the writer uses to “set the stage” for the reader. The thesis statement provides the focus for the writing that follows and lets the reader know what the essay is going to be about.

## STEPS IN WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

### Step 1

#### State the topic

**Example:**

*Football for middle school boys*

### Step 2

#### State the main idea of the topic

**Example:**

*Football is an important sport for middle school boys to play because it helps use their strategic thinking and physical strength.*

### Step 3

#### State the first point in support of your main idea

**Example:**

*Middle school boys have a lot of energy that they need to get out of their system.*

### Step 4

#### State the second point in support of your main idea

**Example:**

*Middle school boys can get energy out of their system while using their brains for strategic thinking about the plays against the opposing team.*

### Step 5

#### State the third point in support of your main idea

**Example:**

*Middle school boys can use football as a structured alternative to fighting or inappropriate physical contact throughout the school day.*

### Step 6

#### State one possible opposing point that might be valid, though you disagree

**Example:**

*Football is mindless and too dangerous for young boys to play.*

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## Step 7

### Thesis Type #1: Simple Thesis

\_\_\_\_\_ is important because \_\_\_\_\_.  
(insert Step 1 response here) (insert Step 2 response here)

#### Example:

*Football is an important sport for middle school boys to play because it helps use their strategic thinking and physical strength.*

### Thesis Type #2: Thesis with Concession

Even though \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_.  
(insert Step 6 response here) (insert Step 2 response here) (insert Step 3 response here)

#### Example:

*Even though football can be thought of as mindless and too dangerous for boys, football is an important sport for middle school boys to play because it requires them to use both strategic thinking and physical strength.*

### Thesis Type #3: Thesis with Multiple Reasons

\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_,  
(insert Step 2 response here) (insert Step 3 response here)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(insert Step 4 response here) (insert Step 5 response here)

#### Example:

*Football is an important sport for middle school boys to play because it requires them to use strategic thinking, physical strength and provides a structured alternative to fighting.*

### Thesis Type #4: Thesis Statement with Concessions and Reasons

Even though \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Also, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(insert Step 6 response here) (insert Step 2 response here) (insert Step 3 response here)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(insert Step 4 response here) (insert Step 5 response here)

#### Example:

*Even though critics say football is a mindless sport and too dangerous for young boys, it is an important sport because it requires middle school boys to use both strategic thinking and physical strength. Football also allows boys the opportunity to get energy out of their system, provides an alternative to fighting and allows them to think better in class.*

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## Step 8

### Refine the Wording

Ask these questions about the resulting thesis:

- Is it a complete sentence (and not a question)?
- Does it have an opposing view? (If appropriate)
- Does the statement lead to a dead-end or does it call for additional information and explanation?
- Can you actually prove/support the thesis within your writing?
- Can your writing provide enough evidence to support the thesis?
- Have you avoided using generalizations? (e.g., all, everyone, no one)
- Have you avoided off-putting words such as 'should' and 'must'?

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## LESSON PLAN FOR HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT



**NOTE:** This lesson plan refers to Steps 1-8 on pages 1-3 of the Thesis Statement Tab.

Lesson #1 10 minutes	Lesson #2 10 minutes	Lesson #3 15 minutes	Lesson #4 10 minutes	Lesson #5 15 minutes
<p>Explain what a thesis statement is, what it does for the reader and where it appears in the writing process</p> <p>Share five examples of thesis statements from texts you have previously read</p> <p>Point out how the examples you share do or do not follow the patterns of the thesis fill-ins from Step 7</p>	<p>Model Steps 1 and 2 using a simple topic that you have previously studied</p>	<p>As a whole class, use a different, but familiar topic to practice Steps 1 and 2</p> <p>Debrief this process with the class and provide feedback</p>	<p>Model Steps 3, 4 and 5 continuing with the topic from Lesson #2</p>	<p>As a whole class, continue with the topic from Lesson #3 and practice Steps 3, 4 and 5</p>
Lesson #6 20 minutes	Lesson #7 20 minutes	Lesson #8 20 minutes	Lesson #9 20 minutes	Lesson #10 20 minutes
<p>Model Step 6 and Step 7 (Simple Thesis only), continuing with the topic from Lesson #4</p> <p>As a whole class, practice Step 6 and Step 7 (Simple Thesis) continuing with the topic from Lesson #4</p> <p>Debrief this process with the class and provide feedback</p>	<p>Model Step 7 (Thesis with Concession only), using the same topic from Lesson #6</p> <p>As a whole class, practice Step 7 (Thesis with Concession only) using the same topic from Lesson #6</p> <p>Debrief this process with the class and provide feedback</p>	<p>Model Step 7 (Thesis with Multiple Reasons), using the same topic from Lesson #7</p> <p>As a whole class, practice Step 7 (Thesis with Multiple Reasons) using the same topic from Lesson #7</p> <p>Debrief this process with the class and provide feedback</p>	<p>Model Step 7 (Thesis Statement with Concessions and Reasons), using the same topic from Lesson #8</p> <p>As a whole class, practice Step 7 (Thesis Statement with Concessions and Reasons) using the same topic from Lesson #8</p> <p>Debrief this process with the class and provide feedback</p>	<p>Model Step 8</p> <p>As a whole class, practice Step 8</p> <p>Have individual students choose a new, previously studied topic and create a new thesis statement using Steps 1-8</p> <p>Give specific feedback to individuals and share examples with the whole class</p>