

So, you're writing an essay and you're not exactly sure about all the bits and pieces that you need. Well, here are some simple explanations based on my experiences as a consultant at the BGSU Writing Center. These are explanations that I found were useful when I helped other writers understand the bits and pieces that make up an essay. Here we go!

Thinking about the Thesis Statement

There are many different kinds of thesis statements and the kind of thesis you use will depend on what you want the thesis to do. No matter what specific thesis you use, they all have one goal in common:

The first goal of the thesis is to let the reader know what your paper is about.

This means the thesis should contain a precise, concise explanation of what the overall argument of your paper is. Answering the following question should help you determine what to put in this part of the thesis:

What is a common idea you discuss or want to discuss in every paragraph?

Now that you have the overall argument of your paper in the thesis, you might want to think about what you want the thesis to do for you. If you're writing a report and your main goal is to convey information, you may not need the thesis to do anything more complicated than to tell the reader what the paper is about. However, if the aim of your paper is argumentative and you want to persuade the reader to your side of an argument, your thesis needs to do a little more work. Your thesis can do more for you in addition to telling the reader about your overall goal.

Relax and don't panic. This isn't as hard as it might seem.

Ready to keep going? An effective thesis for an argumentative thesis should be forecasting and argumentative.

The second goal of the thesis is to let the reader know what the individual points are that you will use to prove the overall argument of your paper.

Accomplishing this will make your thesis forecasting. Sometimes at this stage of writing a thesis, it helps to think of the thesis like the table of contents in a book. The table of contents let the readers of the book know what the separate chapters will be about. This portion of the thesis will let the reader know what the separate paragraphs are going to be

about. It will also let you give the reader an overview of what your individual arguments are going to be.

It might help to think of the structure like this:

Overall argument + Supporting arguments

Many times using “because” or another subordinating conjunction is a good way to connect the overall argument with the supporting arguments because subordinating conjunctions connect ideas as well as show the relationship between those ideas.

Now that the thesis for your argumentative essay is forecasting, you might be worried about how to make it argumentative. Don’t worry. You don’t need to completely restructure the core of your thesis. Making the thesis argumentative is all about wording. What’s the most infuriating thing about being in an argument? At least for me, the most infuriating thing about an argument is that the other person doesn’t agree with me. The thesis for your argumentative paper should be worded in a way that will show your stance on an argument.

Other people should be able to disagree with what you said in your thesis.

That sounds a little odd, right? You want people to agree with you, so why would you want to write something that people might disagree with? You write the argumentative thesis to let the reader know what your stance is on the position you’ve taken. Because you are writing an argumentative essay to convince somebody about your position on a topic, remember that you are writing for people who disagree with you or who have never seriously thought about your position. You don’t need to convince people who already agree with you. So, your thesis should be something that somebody can reasonably disagree with. Let the rest of your paper convince the reader not to disagree with you.

Quick Summary

No matter what type of thesis you use, it should give the reader the overall goal of your paper. If the thesis is for an argumentative essay, a forecasting thesis should provide the readers with the supporting arguments you will use to prove the overall goal of your paper. An argumentative thesis should be worded in a way that shows the reader your clear stance on the position you want to argue. Many times, the most effective type of thesis for an argumentative essay is both forecasting and argumentative.