

Lesson 20  
Day 1

## Thesis Statements and Transitional Sentences

A **thesis statement** is a one or two sentence summary of the main purpose or point of your entire writing. A thesis statement should be verifiable by using evidence. A thesis statement may also include the writer's point of view or approach to solving or discussing the issue at hand.

A thesis statement is similar to a topic sentence except that a thesis statement is a focused sentence for an entire writing. On the other hand, a topic sentence is a summary for a single paragraph. The thesis statement is placed in the introductory paragraph.

- A thesis statement is **not** just a general statement.

Poor example: In history, there have been many shipwrecks.

Good example: In history many shipwrecks have occurred in the Great Lakes; we will look for a common cause for these accidents.

- A thesis statement is **not** just a general announcement about your paper's subject.

Poor example: In this paper I will explain the benefits of exercise.

Good example: Exercise provides many benefits to the heart; we will examine the results of a five year medical study with control groups of exercisers and non-exercisers.

-and-

Poor example: My paper explores food.

Good example: The choices we make in the foods we eat have a direct impact on our health; this paper will focus on fast food and its impact on teenagers.

- A thesis statement is **not** the title of your paper.

Poor example: Sweet corn is a healthy vegetable.

Good example: There is a theory that corn contains nutrients and vitamins which promote low cholesterol in the human body; we will conduct a study to test this theory.

- A thesis statement is **not** a restatement of known facts.

Poor example: Salt water can have devastating effects on metal objects.

Good example: Salt water is a known contributor to metal fatigue, and it has become a major problem for ocean-going vessels. We will examine this problem by examining the reports of several ship wrecks.

A. Read each set of **thesis statements** and circle the best one from each pair.

1. a. It is a known fact that air pollution has a detrimental effect on humans, and the data is indisputable that this problem is only getting worse.  
b. Air pollution is bad.
2. a. My paper is about houses.  
b. We will explore the effect building codes have on housing markets, because many say the added expense of following building codes isn't worth it.
3. a. Whales are large mammals.  
b. Whales have interesting migration patterns that scientists do not fully understand; perhaps it has something to do with available food or potential mating prospects.
4. a. Writing papers is fun.  
b. Writing a term paper can be a lot of fun if the student adheres to an organized method for developing and assembling his document; this paper will discuss ideas to assist the student.
5. a. Riding horses is a lot of work.  
b. Riding horses can be lot of work, but if you use a proper riding technique as demonstrated in this paper, it can be very enjoyable.
6. a. It has been proven that dogs are not only great pets, but they can accomplish tasks around the house for those who are physically impaired.  
b. I love my dog Lucy.
7. a. Birds of prey are top predators of the sky.  
b. Birds of prey effectively help control the diseased rodent population by preying on the weak, old, and injured.
8. a. Gas shortages and fuel rationing are inevitable when there is civil unrest in the Middle East, but often it is simply a ploy to raise prices.  
b. Gas prices rise when there is trouble in the Middle East.

Thesis Statements and  
Transitional Sentences

A. Write an **X** next to the sentences that are good examples of **thesis statements**.

- 1. \_\_\_ This paper will discuss European countries.
- 2. \_\_\_ This paper will discuss if there are advantages to traveling to the moon again.
- 3. \_\_\_ Tornadoes are dangerous, and we will discuss how to build structures to withstand them.
- 4. \_\_\_ This paper will discuss the advantages of digital cameras over those that require film.
- 5. \_\_\_ Tigers in the wild are becoming an endangered species, and we need to figure out a way to protect them.
- 6. \_\_\_ We will discuss the eating and hunting habits of tigers in the wild.
- 7. \_\_\_ Vacations are usually a lot of fun.
- 8. \_\_\_ Football is a dangerous sport.
- 9. \_\_\_ This paper will examine specific injuries that are typically suffered by bull riders.
- 10. \_\_\_ There are many types of snakes in the Amazon, some of which have made their way to the United States

B. Look at the three examples from above that are not good examples of **thesis statements**. Rewrite each of the three and turn them into good examples of thesis statements. Use your imagination.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statements and  
Transitional Sentences

A. Write a **thesis statement** for each idea below. Be creative and write about anything that is related to each idea.

1. swimming pools

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2. large groups of people

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3. poisonous snakes

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4. interstate highways

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## Thesis Statements and Transitional Sentences

As you know, paragraphs are nothing more than groups of related sentences placed together. However, it may not be obvious to the reader how paragraphs in a writing are related to each other when there are multiple paragraphs in the writing.

Transitional sentences are used to connect these seemingly unrelated paragraphs together to create a fluid flow of the writing. For that reason, transitional sentences are deemed to be the glue that holds independent pieces of a writing together. Without transitional sentences, the writer is often left with disconnected thoughts that do not flow well from one paragraph to another.

A transitional sentence comes at the end of a paragraph and signals that a shift, contradiction, or elaboration will be coming in the following paragraph. Sometimes the first sentence of the next paragraph will also contain transition language which provides a link to the previous paragraph.

Transitional sentences do not have to be lengthy or elaborate; in fact, a transitional sentence may only be a few words in length.

Below is an example of transitional sentences in use.

Earthquakes are a constant problem for countries in the Pacific Rim. The Pacific Plate and Indo-Australian Plates are constantly pushing against each other. When the pressure becomes too much, something must give and an earthquake occurs. **As a result there is often unfortunate massive devastation.**

**Depending on the epicenter, there can be severe damage to both physical property and human life.** It can take decades for a country to recover from such a natural disaster. Scientists are constantly working hard to find new ways to warn the population of coming earthquakes, but even with due warning there is only so much that can be done to protect people and property from damage caused by a major earthquake.

Can you see from the above example how the last sentence of the first paragraph is related to the first sentence of the second paragraph? Both mention the devastation or damage caused by earthquakes.

- A. Read the paragraphs below. **On the next page**, write a transitional sentence to end each paragraph. It is easy to write a transitional sentence if you first look at the beginning sentence of the next paragraph. Simply write a sentence to end one paragraph that is at least somewhat **related to both** the first sentence of the next paragraph and the paragraph where the transitional sentence is to be located.

I am in the process of making a homemade pasta dinner for my family. I have four things that I always prepare when making a pasta dinner: the sauce, meatballs, noodles, and bread.

I always start the night before by making the dough for fresh bread. I start with some warm water and yeast, and then I add some unbleached flour, sugar, and a little salt. After these ingredients are mixed, they are placed in a bowl and left to sit overnight in the refrigerator. 1. \_\_\_\_\_

In the morning I start the process of making the sauce for my dinner. This usually is an all day procedure. I start with pureed tomatoes and then add some tomato paste. Of course I also add some oregano, basil, parsley, and plenty of garlic. 2. \_\_\_\_\_

I put some lean ground beef into a bowl along with a touch of table wine, garlic, salt, pepper, Italian bread crumbs, basil, parsley flakes, and a generous amount of parmesan cheese. After mixing these contents thoroughly, I roll the meat into balls which are placed on cookie sheets to cook in the oven. 3. \_\_\_\_\_

I remove the bread dough from its bowl and cut it into four separate pieces. These pieces are pulled into oblong dough logs and placed onto greased cookie sheets. I make sure to coat the tops of the dough logs with melted butter before placing them into the oven. The smell of fresh baking bread soon fills the house with an amazing scent. 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Although it is a lot of work to make a homemade pasta dinner, everyone loves it and eats until they are bursting at the seams. There always seems to be enough for leftovers for the next day. No matter how many loaves of fresh bread I bake, it always seems to disappear long before the leftover pasta is eaten.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Thesis Statements and  
Transitional Sentences

A. Write three pairs of **transitional sentences** that link the first to the second.

1. a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. a. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_