

# Practice Developing a Thesis Statement

**E**very persuasive paper you write must include a thesis statement. A thesis statement answers the question, “What is your point?” It combines a declaration on your topic with the *reasons why* you believe the declaration is true. It serves as a road map to your paper, stating briefly—in only one sentence—what your opinion is, and why.

Your thesis statement should be written before you write your actual paper because it will help mold and guide what you write. As you write your paper, you may find you need to tweak your sentence to sound better or to better reflect the facts you discover in your research.

Practice writing thesis statements by following the directions below:

## *Directions*

Select three of the questions from the “Question List” your teacher will give you. For each question, begin by writing a declaration—a bold opinion on the topic. Next, write at least three *reasons why* you believe as you do.

Once you have your declaration and your reasons why, mold all of that into one sentence, which will be your thesis statement. This isn’t difficult, but it can take a little time. Here is an example:

**Question:** Should the FBI or police be able to see what books you have checked out from the library?

**Declaration:** It should be illegal for the government to see what books a person checks out from the library.

### **Reasons Why:**

It is a violation of the First Amendment.

It violates our right to privacy.

It turns librarians into law enforcement officials.

**Thesis statement:** It should be illegal for the government to access someone’s library records because to do so violates the First Amendment, violates our right to privacy and turns librarians into law enforcement officials.

# Question List #1

1. Is it right for the government to require kids to attend school?
2. Should smoking cigarettes be illegal?
3. Would it ever be okay to arrest someone before he or she commits a crime?
4. Is our society too lenient with cheaters?
5. Do you deserve an allowance? Or a raise in your allowance?
6. Is homework necessary in order for students to learn?
7. Should students be able to attend school over the Internet?
8. Who should pay when a guy and a girl go on a date?
9. Are video games too violent?
10. Is it fair for teachers to give you a lower grade if you turn in an assignment late?
11. Should skateboarding be allowed on school grounds, parks, and public sidewalks?
12. Should unchaperoned young people be allowed into R-Rated movies?
13. Should young people be allowed to have a TV in their own room? Their own telephone? Their own computer with Internet access?
14. Do rodeos promote cruelty to animals?
15. Is it fair for schools to require decent grades from students who participate in sports, student council, band, etc.?
16. Should you spay/neuter your pets?
17. Are schools for only one gender a good idea, i.e., schools for boys or schools for girls?
18. Should the legal age for driving be raised?
19. Should public school students be required to wear uniforms?
20. Should the legal age for drinking be lowered?
21. Is it okay for a public library to remove from its shelves books that people find objectionable?
22. Is it a good idea for schools to ban junk food and soft drink vending machines on school property?
23. Should middle school and junior high students be allowed to leave campus during the day?
24. Should parents refuse to let their children hang out with friends they don't like?
25. Should parents limit the time their children spend playing video games?

# Question List #2

1. Are small schools better than large schools?
2. Should the law require people to wear seat belts?
3. Should prayer be allowed in public schools?
4. Is rock music better today than it was in the 1980s? 1970s? 1960s?
5. Should young people be allowed to buy cigarettes?
6. Will a woman ever become president?
7. Does prison reform people?
8. Does some rap music demean women?
9. Is it okay for men and women to use cosmetic surgery to remain youthful looking?
10. Is it okay for young people, like yourself, to have cosmetic surgery?
11. Should newspaper reporters ever have to reveal a confidential source?
12. Should teachers be paid more than professional athletes?
13. Should employers have the right to see your medical records?
14. Should there be a salary cap in professional sports?
15. Is the use of performance enhancing drugs casting a negative shadow on sports ?
16. Is it wrong to eat animal products, such as milk and eggs?
17. Should pharmaceutical companies be allowed to advertise on television?
18. Do Americans spend too much time watching television?
19. Do Americans have a weight problem?
20. Are some people just born "bad"?
21. Can our founding fathers still be considered good men if they owned slaves?
22. Should a mother stay home with her young children, rather than work outside the home?
23. Should the Constitution be changed to allow people born in other countries to run for President of the United States?
24. Should foul language be banned on television?
25. Is "grounding" an effective punishment for young people?

## Question List #3

1. Is the death penalty ethical?
2. Are taxes necessary?
3. Is capitalism the best type of economy?
4. Should a state recognize same-sex marriage?
5. Should the government help fund stem cell research?
6. Should the United States provide financial aid to foreign countries in need?
7. Should pharmaceutical companies provide low-cost or free drugs for AIDS victims in Africa?
8. Should the United States ever forgive foreign debt?
9. Should schools provide day care to assist teenage mothers?
10. Should drug addicts be sent to prison?
11. Should students be required to learn a foreign language?
12. Is it fair for school officials to be allowed to search student lockers and backpacks for drugs or weapons?
13. Is it fair that auto insurance rates are more expensive for males under the age of 21 than for females?
14. Is it ethical to do scientific research on animals?
15. Should schools teach creationism along with the theory of evolution?
16. Should the government fund artists through the National Endowment for the Arts?
17. Should major league baseball test its players for possible drug use?
18. Should people be allowed to gamble online?
19. Should the government tax purchases made over the Internet?
20. Should teenage murderers ever be sentenced to death?
21. Are people born innately good or evil?
22. Should the descendants of slaves be given reparations from the government?
23. Should health insurance pay for alternative health treatments, like massage, acupuncture or homeopathy?
24. Should the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approve drugs for the marketplace more quickly?
25. Should states require citizens to obtain a license before becoming parents?