Tip Sheet: Writing an Expository Thesis

An expository thesis statement—common in WRIT 121—is a sentence (or two) that conveys the central idea or point an essay will explain. Expository thesis statements generally contain two important elements: the topic of your essay, and your opinion of or observation about that topic. Note the following example:

- Recycling household products is an important and beneficial activity.

In this example, “recycling household products,” is the essay’s topic, and “is an important and beneficial activity” is the central idea or opinion the essay will explain. Anyone reading this thesis can assume that the writer will explain how and why this activity is both important and beneficial—in short, how and why recycling is a good thing. The thesis therefore establishes the focus on an essay that, in this case, will convince readers of the benefits of recycling.

While not all essays demand that you include a thesis, including a thesis can help your readers to understand your essay’s point and purpose. Furthermore, some instructors require that you include a written thesis in your essays. Refer to your class notes, your assignment sheet, or your instructor whenever you have a question about writing a thesis.

The Expository Thesis: Answering a Question

An expository essay—an essay in which you explain and analyze a topic—requires a thesis that reveals the nature of your explanation or analysis. Therefore, you might think of the expository thesis as your answer to a complex or interesting question, as in these examples:

**Question:** In what ways is Facebook influencing our notions about communication, privacy, and who we are as individuals?

**Thesis:** Facebook is profoundly influencing our notions about communication and where we as individuals fit in the world.

(This thesis commits the writer to explain how Facebook is influencing, perhaps changing, our views.)
Question: Why has Justin Beiber become an enormous success at such a young age?
Thesis: There are several factors that help to explain the enormous success of Justin Beiber.
(This thesis commits the writer to identify those factors and explain how each factor has each played a part in Justin Beiber’s success.

Question: How do we explain the enormous popularity of “reality” television?
Thesis: Reality shows are popular because they tap into several basic cultural desires.
(This thesis commits you to identify these “cultural desires” and explain how these shows tap into, or fulfill, them.)

Note: To focus this topic even more, you might choose to write about a specific type of reality show, or even a specific reality program.

Additional Tips for Writing Your Thesis

- Write your thesis in a simple, clear sentence—you can always modify it later, if necessary.

- Allow your thesis to change as you write your essay—this sometimes happens as you write, so let it, and adjust your thesis as the needs of your essay dictate.

- Place your thesis appropriately. Often, the thesis appears as the final sentence of your introduction, but it can be placed elsewhere, according to your needs—unless your instructor has required that you place it in a specific part of your essay.

- After each draft or revision of your essay, reread your thesis carefully to ensure that it matches the content in your essay. If it doesn’t, rewrite it.

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