

## WRITING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

Given now what you know from the “What is a Thesis Statement” article, how do you write a clear, focused and directive thesis statement for different kinds of written compositions? First, let’s take a look at posts on Internet or network discussion boards.<sup>1</sup>

### *Discussion Board Posts*

Discussion board posts are usually fairly short or have word count limits (e.g., 300 or 500 words). Discussion posts, as with thesis statements, can be used to inform, evaluate, persuade, or accomplish other purposes. If there is a maximum word count limit, every word you write must be worthwhile. Since it is always best to have a thesis statement in a post, it must be very concise but effective to lead the reader into and through the discussion. It will likely be easiest to make the thesis statement the first brief sentence of the post.

#### *Initial Post Example:*

In an initial post of a maximum 600 words, I respond to Dr. Ernest Jacob’s debatable article on how to raise sheep for their maximum fatness and wool. I might make my thesis statement my first sentence, brief and pointed, like so:

**I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Jacob’s recommended methods for raising profitable sheep.**

Note that this example thesis is informal in tone, since it uses the first person “I will” perspective. The first person perspective is naturally very common and expressive in this writing context. This thesis statement is very clear in its purpose to “evaluate” chosen aspects of the topic. The writer has smoothly directed the content of his/her entire discussion post by this one concise sentence.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Reply Post Examples:*

In a reply post to my classmate, Marmaduke, of a maximum 300 words, I respond to Marmaduke’s initial evaluation of Dr. Jacob’s sheep raising methods. Marmaduke approves of Jacob’s methods, but I disapprove. I might make my thesis statement my starting sentence(s), brief and pointed, like so:

**Marmaduke, thanks for your evaluation of Jacob’s sheep raising methods. You make good points, but I more significantly disagree with you and will explain.**

Note in this reply example the tone remains informal, using the second person “you” perspective. One could argue that the purpose(s) is to reply/discuss or to evaluate because there is both agreement and disagreement; and/or to persuade which is implied by “more significantly” and

“will explain.” To be precise in this last example, the first sentence provides the discussion context; the second sentence states the writer’s actual intent.

The writer constructed this thesis in two concise sentences rather than one due to the informal tone of address to Marmaduke and the low 300 word count limit. Though the informal tone in discussion posts is not wrong,<sup>3</sup> this same thesis could have been written in fewer words by using the more formal and academic third person “he/she/it” perspective; like so:

**This classmate’s evaluation of Jacob’s sheep raising methods offers good points; however, significant disagreement must be taken and explained.**

Note that the informal and formal thesis statements accomplish the same thing for the reply discussion post. The informal thesis is 24 words; while the more formal and academic thesis is 19 words. In all cases, it is therefore more efficient to write the thesis statement as only one clear concise sentence, but one sentence is not grammatically required.

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<sup>1</sup> For comments on electronic discussion boards, see: Hacker, Diana (2006). *The Bedford handbook* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martins, pp. 17, 548-549.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion and illustrations of conciseness, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 206-212.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion and illustrations of valid and poor stylistic uses of first, second, and third person perspectives, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 56-60, 178-179.