

TESTING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

An effective thesis argues for a position in a debate. Keep the following guidelines in mind to develop an effective thesis statement.

- A thesis should be your answer to a question and should take a position that needs to be argued and supported. It should not be a statement of fact or a description. Make sure your position is debatable by anticipating opposing viewpoints and counterarguments.
- A thesis should match the scope of the research project. If your thesis is too broad, explore a subtopic of your original topic. If your thesis is too narrow, pose a research question that has more than one answer.
- A thesis should be focused. Avoid vague words such as *interesting* or *good*. Use concrete language and make sure your thesis lets readers know your position.
- A thesis should stand up to the “So what?” test (see 1c). Ask yourself why readers should be interested in your essay and care about your thesis.

54b Organize ideas with an informal plan.

The body of your paper will consist of evidence in support of your thesis. Try sketching an informal plan to focus and organize your ideas. Sophie Harba, for example, used this simple plan to outline the structure of her argument.

INFORMAL OUTLINE

- Debates about the government’s role in regulating food have a long history in the United States.
- Some experts argue that we should focus on the dangers of unhealthy eating habits and on preventing chronic diseases linked to diet.
- But food regulations are not a popular solution because many Americans object to government restrictions on personal choice.
- Food regulations designed to prevent chronic disease don’t ask Americans to give up their freedom; they ask Americans to see health as a matter of public good.

56 Integrating sources

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Quotations, summaries, paraphrases, and facts will help you develop your argument, but they cannot speak for you. You need to find a balance between the words of your sources and your own voice so that readers always know who is speaking in your paper. You can use several strategies to integrate sources into your paper while maintaining your voice.

- Use sources as concisely as possible so that your own thinking and voice aren't lost (56a and 56b).
- Use signal phrases to avoid dropping quotations into your paper without indicating the boundary between your words and the source's words (56c).
- Use language that shows readers how each source supports your argument and how sources relate to one another (56d).

56a Summarize and paraphrase effectively.

In your academic writing, keep the emphasis on your ideas and your language; use your own words to summarize and paraphrase sources and to explain your points. Whether you choose to summarize or paraphrase a source depends on your purpose.

★ **Using sources responsibly** When you use your own words to summarize or paraphrase, the original idea remains the intellectual property of the author, so you must include a citation. (See 55d.)

Summarizing

When you summarize a source, you express another writer's ideas in your own words, condensing the author's key points and using fewer words than the author.

WHEN TO SUMMARIZE

- When you want to state a source's main ideas simply and briefly in your own words
- When you want to compare arguments or ideas from various sources
- When you want to provide readers with an understanding of a source's argument before you respond to it or launch your own argument

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase, you express an author's ideas in your own words and sentence structure, using approximately the same number of words and details as in the source.

WHEN TO PARAPHRASE

- When the ideas and information are important but the author's exact words are not needed
- When you want to restate a source's ideas in your own words
- When you need to simplify and explain a technical or complicated source

56b Use quotations effectively.

When you quote a source, you borrow the author's exact words and enclose them in quotation marks. Quotation marks show your readers that both the idea and the words belong to the author.

WHEN TO USE QUOTATIONS

- When language is especially vivid or expressive
- When exact wording is needed for technical accuracy
- When it is important to let the debaters of an issue explain their positions in their own words
- When the words of an authority lend weight to an argument
- When the language of a source is the topic of your discussion

To indicate an error such as a misspelling in a quotation, insert the word “sic” in brackets right after the error.

“While Americans of every race, gender and ethnicity are affected by this disease, diabetes disproportionately effects [sic] Black adults in the US.”

Setting off long quotations

When you quote more than four typed lines of prose or more than three lines of poetry, set off the quotation by indenting it one-half inch from the left margin, and use the normal right margin.

Long quotations should be introduced by an informative sentence, usually followed by a colon. Quotation marks are unnecessary because the indented format tells readers that the passage is taken word for word from the source.

In response to critics who claim that laws aimed at stopping us from eating whatever we want are an assault on our freedom of choice, Conly offers a persuasive counterargument:

[L]aws aren’t designed for each one of us individually. Some of us can drive safely at 90 miles per hour, but we’re bound by the same laws as the people who can’t, because individual speeding laws aren’t practical. Giving up a little liberty is something we agree to when we agree to live in a democratic society that is governed by laws. (A23)

NOTE: At the end of an indented quotation, the parenthetical citation goes outside the final mark of punctuation.

56c Use signal phrases to integrate sources.

When you include a paraphrase, summary, or direct quotation of another writer’s work in your paper, prepare your readers for it with introductory words called a *signal phrase*. A signal phrase usually names the author of the source, provides some context for the source material—such as the author’s credentials—and helps readers distinguish your ideas from those of the source.

When you write a signal phrase, choose a verb that fits with the way you are using the source. For example, are you using the

source to support a claim or to refute an argument? The signal phrase you choose shows readers how you want them to think about the source.

WEAK VERB

Lorine Goodwin, a food historian, says, "..."

STRONGER VERB

Lorine Goodwin, a food historian, rejects the claim: "..."

WEAK VERB

Bioethicist David Resnik mentions ...

STRONGER VERB

Bioethicist David Resnik argues ...

NOTE: MLA style calls for verbs in the present tense or present perfect tense (*argues*, *has argued*) to introduce source material unless you include a date that specifies the time of the original author's writing.

USING SIGNAL PHRASES IN MLA PAPERS

To avoid monotony, try to vary both the language and the placement of your signal phrases.

Model signal phrases

Michael Pollan, who has written extensively about Americans' unhealthy eating habits, emphasizes "..."

As health policy experts Mello and others point out, "..."

Marion Nestle, New York University professor of nutrition and public health, notes ...

Bioethicist David Resnik acknowledges that his argument ...

In response to critics, Conly offers a persuasive counterargument: "..."

Verbs in signal phrases

acknowledges	comments	endorses	points out
adds	compares	explains	reasons
admits	confirms	grants	refutes
agrees	contends	illustrates	rejects
argues	declares	implies	reports
asserts	denies	insists	responds
believes	disputes	notes	suggests
claims	emphasizes	observes	writes

Heading includes the student's name, instructor's name, course, and date.

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Professor Baros-Moon
Engl 1101
9 November 2017

Harba 1

Student's last name and the page number appear in the right-hand corner of every page.

Use Times New Roman or another easy-to-read font.

What's for Dinner? Personal Choices vs. Public Health
Should the government enact laws to regulate healthy eating choices? Many Americans would answer an emphatic "No," arguing that what and how much we eat should be left to individual choice rather than unreasonable laws.

Center the title. Add no extra space above or below it, and use no quotation marks or italics.

Others might argue that it would be unreasonable for the government not to enact legislation, given the rise of chronic diseases that result from harmful diets. In this debate, both the definition of reasonable regulations and the role of government to legislate food choices are at stake. In the name of public health and safety, state governments have the responsibility to shape health policies and to regulate healthy eating choices, especially since doing so offers a potentially large social benefit for a relatively small cost.

Use a 1-inch margin on all sides of the page, and double-space the text.

Debates surrounding the government's role in regulating food have a long history in the United States. According to Lorine Goodwin, a food historian, nineteenth-century reformers

Formatting the paper: Other concerns

Group projects If you are writing a group project, create a cover page with all members' names, the professor's name, the course, and the date, all aligned left on separate double-spaced lines. Center the title on a new line a few spaces down. Starting on the first text page, include all members' last names and the page number, aligned top and right, on every page. If all last names will not fit on a single line, include only the page number.

Capitalization, italics, and quotation marks In titles of works, capitalize all words except articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (*to, from, between, and so on*), coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*), and the *to* in infinitives — unless the word is first or last in the title or subtitle. Follow these guidelines in your paper even if the title appears in all capital or all lowercase letters in the source.

Italicize the titles of books, journals, magazines, and other long works, such as websites. Use quotation marks around the titles of articles, short stories, poems, and other short works.

Long quotations When a quotation is longer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of poetry, set it off from the text by indenting the entire quotation one-half inch from the left margin. Do not use quotation marks when a quotation has been set off from the text by indenting. See page 454 for an example.

Headings While headings are generally not needed for brief essays, readers may find them helpful for long or complex essays. Place each heading in the same style and size. If you need subheadings (level 2, level 3), be consistent in styling them. Place headings at the left margin without any indent. Capitalize headings as you would titles.

Visuals MLA classifies visuals as tables and figures (figures include graphs, charts, maps, photographs, and drawings). Place visuals in your essay as near as possible to the relevant text. Label and number each table ("Table 1"), and provide a clear title. Capitalize as you would the title of a work (see above). Place the table number and title on separate lines above the table, flush with the left margin.

For a table that you have borrowed or adapted, give the source below the table in a note like the following:

Source: Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind, "Leadership Is a Conversation," *Harvard Business Review*, June 2012, p. 83.

All other visuals should be labeled "Figure" (abbreviated "Fig."), numbered, and captioned. The label and caption should appear on the same line, aligned left, underneath the visual. Capitalize the caption as you would a sentence; include source information. If your caption includes full source information and you do not cite the source anywhere else in your essay, it

- One of the most famous advertising slogans is Wheaties cereal's "Breakfast of Champions," ^{which} it associated the product with successful athletes.

- Mary McLeod Bethune, [^] was the seventeenth child of enslaved Africans, she founded the National Council of Negro Women.

Minor ideas in these sentences are now expressed in subordinate clauses or phrases.

EXERCISE 20-1

Revise the following run-on sentences using the method of revision suggested in brackets. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

When a

A critic commented on Michael Chabon's use of first-person

perspective, the author was inspired to write his next novels in the third person. [*Restructure the sentence.*]

- Martina recently started working at a new company, it designs and manufactures educational toys. [*Restructure the sentence.*]
- The building is being renovated, therefore at times we have no heat, water, or electricity. [*Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.*]
- I don't think I will buy the new model of smartphone, why spend the money when my current phone works perfectly?
- Walker's coming-of-age novel is set against a gloomy scientific backdrop, the earth's rotation has begun to slow down. [*Use a semicolon.*]
- City officials had good reason to fear a major earthquake, most of the business district was built on landfill. [*Use a colon.*]

EXERCISE 20-2

Revise any run-on sentences using a technique that you find effective. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

Running laps in my backyard wasn't very exciting, ^{but} however, I wanted to keep up my exercise routine while I couldn't use the track at the campus gym.

- Wind power for the home is a supplementary source of energy, it can be combined with electricity, gas, or solar energy.
- Aidan viewed Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* three times and then wrote a paper describing the film as the work of a mysterious modern painter.
- In the Middle Ages, the streets of London were dangerous places, it was safer to travel by boat along the Thames.
- "He's not drunk," I said, "he's in a state of diabetic shock."
- Are you able to endure extreme angle turns, high speeds, frequent jumps, and occasional crashes, then supermoto racing may be a sport for you.

EXERCISE 20-3

In the following rough draft, revise any run-on sentences.

We may blame television for the number of products based on children's TV show characters from Big Bird to SpongeBob, in fact merchandising that capitalizes on a character's popularity started long before television. Raggedy Ann began as a child's rag doll, a few years later books about she and her brother, Raggedy Andy, were published. A cartoonist named Johnny Gruelle painted a cloth face on a family doll and applied for a patent in 1915. Later Gruelle began writing and illustrating stories about Raggedy Ann, then in 1918 he and a publisher teamed up to publish the books and sell the dolls. He was not the only one to try to sell products linked to children's stories. Beatrix Potter published the first of many Peter Rabbit picture books in 1902, no one was better at making a living from spin-offs. Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny became popular, at that point Potter began putting pictures of them and their little animal friends on merchandise. Potter understood that her fans wanted to see her characters not only in books but also on teapots and plates and lamps, therefore her merchandise was successful. Potter and Gruelle, like countless others before and since, knew that entertaining children could be a profitable business.

TO ANSWER A QUESTION

Are these new drug tests 100 percent reliable?
Not in the opinion of most experts.

TRANSITIONS

And now the opposing arguments.

EXCLAMATIONS

Not again!

IN ADVERTISING

Fewer carbs. Improved taste.

Although fragments are sometimes appropriate, writers and readers do not always agree on when they are appropriate. Writing in complete sentences is always a sensible choice.

EXERCISE 19-1

Repair any fragment by attaching it to a nearby sentence or by rewriting it as a complete sentence. If a word group is correct, write "correct" after it. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

One Greek island that should not be missed is Mykonos, ^a ~~A~~ vacation spot for Europeans and a playground for the rich and famous.

- Listening to the playlist her sister had created, Blanca was overcome with a mix of emotions. Happiness, homesickness, and nostalgia.
- Cortés and his soldiers were astonished when they looked down from the mountains and saw Tenochtitlán. The magnificent capital of the Aztecs.
- Although my spoken Spanish is not very good. I can read the language with ease.
- There are several reasons for not eating meat. One reason being that dangerous chemicals are used throughout the various stages of meat production.
- To learn how to sculpt beauty from everyday life. This is my intention in studying art and archaeology.

EXERCISE 19-2

Repair each fragment in the following passage by attaching it to a nearby sentence or by rewriting it as a complete sentence.

Digital technology has revolutionized information delivery. Forever blurring the lines between information and entertainment. Yesterday's readers of books and newspapers are today's readers of e-books and news sites. Countless readers have moved on from print information entirely. Choosing instead to scroll their way through a text online or on an e-reader. Once a nation of people spoon-fed television commercials and the six o'clock evening news. We are now seemingly addicted to YouTube and social media. On family road trips, Dad or Mom used to wrestle with a road map.