

## Grades 6-8 Creating a Thesis Statement and Topic Sentences

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**Strand** Writing

**SOL** 6.7e, f, j  
7.7b, e, f  
8.7

### Materials

- Projection screen
- Available technology
- Develop Your Web: Ideas to Sort handout
- T Chart Graphic organizer
- Chart paper/markers/tape (or available technology)
- Highlighters (several different colors)

### Lesson

1. Create a T chart on the board with the key words "thesis" and "topic sentence." Ask students to volunteer descriptions of each of the terms. When discussing the term "thesis" ask students if they recognize the term "hypothesis." Ask students where they have heard the term hypothesis and ask them what it means. (Hypothesis: an explanation of a phenomenon that can be tested in a way that proves or disproves it.) Point out that *thesis* is from the Greek meaning something set down. Explain that as writers, their thesis statement will be the idea they are trying to prove.
2. After students have brainstormed what each term means, ask students to write the following definitions on their T charts:

**Thesis:** a proposition (idea) put forth to be discussed and proven. A thesis statement has two basic components: a topic and a comment.

**Topic sentence:** Introduces the main idea of the paragraph  
Can be the first sentence of the paragraph  
Provides a transition between paragraphs  
Gets the reader's attention through carefully selected vocabulary  
States the focus of the paragraph

3. Emphasize that a thesis statement must have something to prove. Present the sit and sort activity to the class. Arrange students into groups of three. Present each student with Develop Your Web (template attached). Explain that students must look at each of the ideas presented on the sheet to determine the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details. Students will use the ideas to create an organized web. Not all information will go into the completed web. Groups must determine which ideas do not support the thesis statement.

4. Allow groups to create their webs on chart paper. Groups will publish their completed webs. The teachers and students will view published webs to identify similarities and differences. The class will collaborate with the teacher to determine the most accurate responses.
5. Using a projection device, give students the following prompt: "Describe what makes a school year great?" (Teachers may choose another prompt). Give students 3-5 minutes to brainstorm a list individually on their own paper. Ask students to volunteer the information from their lists. Record the information so the whole class can see the developing list.
6. Next, ask students if they noticed any broad categories emerging from the information in the list. Ask students to propose several categories into which the information can be sorted. Record each of these categories and designate a color for each.
7. Model the prewriting strategy of sorting information from the list into a web. In the center of the web place the topic "What makes a school year great." The main categories that emerge from the class brainstorm will be placed around the topic.
8. Refer students back to the class list. Use different colored highlighters to highlight information to go in each category. Remind students that they do not need to use everything on the list. Next, show students how to sort the information from the list as details branching off from the categories of the web.
8. Model creating a thesis statement on top of the web. The topic is: "Our school is great" and the comment: "because....." The comment is derived from the broad categories the information was sorted into.
9. Collaborate with the students to compose a topic sentence for each category.
10. After modeling how to generate and organize a list of ideas to create the web, arrange students into pairs or small groups. Give students the following prompt: "Explain why our town/city/county is a great place to live." Tell students they will brainstorm a list and sort the list into categories by creating a web. They will also collaborate to develop a thesis statement and topic sentences based on the information recorded in the web.  
  
For example: Town is a great place to live because of the shopping, free Friday concerts, and biking trails.
11. Require pairs to trade their completed webs. To evaluate the thesis statement, ask students to use one color to highlight the topic and a different color to highlight the comment. Then in each category, require students to highlight the information that pertains to the topic with one color, and the details that support/prove the topic with another color.

### **Attachments, Links, or Resources**

Tips and examples for writing thesis statements:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>

Exit slip: Ask each student to write a thesis statement about what they learned in the lesson about thesis statements and topic sentences. Remind students that the statement includes a topic and a comment.

### Develop Your Web: Ideas to Sort

Directions: Create an organized web using the ideas presented below. Determine the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details. Remember: Not all information will go into your completed web. You must determine which ideas do not support the thesis statement.

The first reason why you should eat breakfast before going to school is for your health.

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You are going to get gastritis and many problems with your health if you don't eat breakfast.

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Another reason for eating breakfast is that you need food to do well in your classes.

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My mom makes the best breakfast in the world.

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It's not healthy to have an empty stomach all day long.

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Your body and your brain are not going to function as good as they could because you have no energy and no strength.

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Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially for students, and skipping it has consequences for your health, your school, and your defense mechanism.

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The last reason to have breakfast every day is that you can avoid diseases if you eat some breakfast in the morning.

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Dinners should be a well-balanced meal.

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When you try to learn something and have nothing in your stomach, you are going to have a lot of trouble succeeding.

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Diseases will have a stronger effect on you because you're going to get sick easier than people who have breakfast every day.

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Exercising is a great way to develop the discipline you need to focus in school.

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Many people think that they should not eat because they are going to feel tired, but that is not true.

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Raisin Bran is the best tasting cereal.