



SUPPORTING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

An essay consists of

- ❖ **A THESIS:** the point you plan to prove to your reader.
- ❖ **SUPPORTING POINTS:** the ideas which prove the thesis. (These are generally your paragraphs; each will begin with a **topic sentence**.)
- ❖ **A CONCLUSION:** a restatement of your thesis, perhaps with analysis of your idea or application (now that you've proved your thesis, how can your reader use it?). *Don't add new material.*

Many college instructors expect an essay to have at least THREE SUPPORTING POINTS, each one developed with appropriate details in a separate paragraph. You may find that some ideas only break down reasonably into two supporting points; others need four or more. Let the logic of your thesis dictate the number you have. The important point is that you have supported your thesis adequately so that your reader is convinced that your thesis is valid.



Here are three examples of possible essays:

1. **Thesis:** I would like to be a counselor for families who have problems keeping together.
Why? I have had success in counseling others.
Why? Problems in my own life have given me insight into the problems of others.
Why? Counseling is something I could enjoy and make a living from.
Notice that if you answer the question "WHY?", you can convince your reader that you will make a good counselor. What can you do with your conclusion? Perhaps you could invite your reader to make use of your services – an application of the thesis.
2. **Thesis:** I would like to open my own blacksmith operation.
Why? I could teach people to create different configurations with metal.
Why? I would like to revive the dying art of blacksmithing.
Why? It would give people a chance to learn something new.
Conclusion: *Do you have any ideas? Could you make a comment that learning a dying art would be good not only for you but also for others? Could you urge the reader to do something similar for himself?*

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3. **Thesis** I would like to work with elderly people who are old and sick.
Why? Not many people want to work with the elderly.
Why? I would enjoy it.
Why? I have the personal qualities necessary for working with old people.
Conclusion: Come up with your own suggestion for how to end this essay.



You may have been told in the past to write an OUTLINE for your papers before you start the paper itself. This method is simply an alternative outline. An expanded version might look like this:

- ❖ **INTRODUCTION:** *Thesis* – your major provable point.
Attention-getter – anecdote, rhetorical question, quote, description / scene, background information, definition, etc. Choose one or more to make your essay more interesting. Include your options in your “outline.”
- ❖ **WHY?** First supporting point. Write a topic sentence for it.
 - **DETAIL:** Reasons, facts, case studies, examples, etc. The details are your “for examples.”
 - **DETAIL:** Add as many details as you need to make your point clear. One may be enough; you may need four or more. If you have three, you probably have enough for your reader’s needs.
- ❖ **WHY?** Second supporting point.
 - **DETAIL**
 - **DETAIL**
 - **DETAIL**
- ❖ **WHY?** Third supporting point.
 - **DETAIL**
 - **DETAIL**
 - **DETAIL**
- ❖ **CONCLUSION:** At the very least, a restatement of the thesis. Some analysis or application of your thesis (even another quote or anecdote) will make your paper more interesting and meaningful for your reader.