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# Outlining the Research Paper

LESSON

# 11

W.2.2, 5–8

The first step in writing a report is to pick a subject. The second step is to find out about the subject. The next step is to sort the information.

## Step 3: Determine the Thesis Statement

You learned about the main idea in Lesson 3. The **thesis statement** is like the main idea. It tells the purpose of your paper.

The thesis statement is one sentence. It is in the first paragraph. A thesis statement is not a fact. It is a general statement that is supported by facts. It tells the reader what he will learn.



# Guided Practice

Answer the questions.

Which of these is the best thesis statement?

- A My report is about an important place.
- B Washington, D.C., was not the first capital of the United States.
- C New York City has many firsts, including the first capital of the new country.
- D New York was the capital of the United States until 1790.



A thesis is not a fact. Choices B and D are incorrect. These are facts. Choice A is too general. Choice A is incorrect. The correct answer is choice C. This sums up the main idea of the paper.

Which of these is the best thesis statement?

- A Thomas Jefferson was our third president.
- B Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence.
- C Thomas Jefferson helped our new nation in many ways.
- D Thomas Jefferson created buildings.



Choices A, B, and D are facts. They tell about Jefferson. These are incorrect. Choice C is the correct answer. Choices A, B, and D support the thesis statement.

## Step 4: Outline the Paper

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The outline helps you plan your paper. It helps you sort your facts. First, write down the main ideas. Then give them a letter. Next, list details that support this idea. Number them. Now, you have sorted your facts into an outline. Here is an example of an outline.

- I. Thesis statement
- II. Body
  - A. Main Idea
    - 1. Detail
    - 2. Detail
  - B. Main Idea
    - 1. Detail
    - 2. Detail
  - C. Main Idea
    - 1. Detail
    - 2. Detail
- III. Conclusion

Each main idea will be a paragraph in your paper.

Sometimes, you find that you need more facts. You can look for more facts that support your main ideas. If you have too many facts about a main idea, you can use only the most important one. You do not have to use all your facts. You should use the details that best support your main ideas.

The **conclusion** is the sentence that sums up the purpose of the paper. It is in the last paragraph.

# Guided Practice

Read the outline. Then answer the questions.

I. Thesis statement: Thomas Jefferson created many important buildings.

II. Body

A. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Monticello
2. Jefferson lived here with his family

B. \_\_\_\_\_

1. University of Virginia
2. school for young people to learn

C. \_\_\_\_\_


1. Virginia State Capitol
2. Virginia's government met here

Match each main idea below with the details that support it.

\_\_\_\_\_ built a government building

\_\_\_\_\_ built his house

\_\_\_\_\_ built a school

 The details support each main idea. These main ideas and details support the thesis statement. Here are the correct answers:

C built a government building

A built his house

B built a school

# Test Yourself

Read the questions. Then answer them.

1 Where should the thesis statement appear in a research paper?

- A in the beginning paragraph
- B in the middle paragraph
- C in the last paragraph
- D in the title

2 How does an outline help you write your paper?

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3 Which is the best thesis statement?

- A Abraham Lincoln had his own holiday named Lincoln's Birthday.
- B George Washington had a holiday called Washington's Birthday.
- C Today, Presidents' Day honors both President Lincoln and President Washington.
- D Many of our national holidays were changed in the 1970s.

4 Read the outline. Where would you add these details in the outline below?

1. celebrate our freedom from England
1. remember people who died fighting for the America
1. remember the hard work of our laborers, or workers

I. Thesis: National holidays are ways to remember America's past every year.

II. Body

A. Memorial Day

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. speeches, parades, put flags on soldiers' graves
3. was May 30, last Monday in May since 1970s

B. Independence Day

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. fireworks, parades
3. July 4

C. Labor Day

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. fireworks
3. first Monday in September

III. Conclusion: The United States has national holidays to remember days and people that are important to America's history