Analytical Thesis Statements

In an analytical paper, you are breaking down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluating the issue or idea, and presenting this breakdown and evaluation to your audience. An analytical thesis statement will explain:

- what you are analyzing
- the parts of your analysis
- the order in which you will be presenting your analysis

Example: An analysis of barn owl flight behavior reveals two kinds of flight patterns: patterns related to hunting prey and patterns related to courtship.

A reader who encountered that thesis in a paper would expect an explanation of the analysis of barn owl flight behavior, and then an explanation of the two kinds of flight patterns.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an analytical thesis statement:

- What did I analyze?
- What did I discover in my analysis?
- How can I categorize my discoveries?
- In what order should I present my discoveries?

Expository (Explanatory) Thesis Statements

In an expository paper, you are explaining something to your audience. An expository thesis statement will tell your audience:

- what you are going to explain to them
- the categories you are using to organize your explanation
- the order in which you will be presenting your categories

Example: The lifestyles of barn owls include hunting for insects and animals, building nests, and raising their young.

A reader who encountered that thesis would expect the paper to explain how barn owls hunt for insects, build nests, and raise young.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an expository thesis statement:

- What am I trying to explain?

- How can I categorize my explanation into different parts?
- In what order should I present the different parts of my explanation?