

Thesis-Driven Essays

What is a thesis-driven essay?

A thesis driven essay is a type of essay that is often associated with the humanities, such as English and History, but can also be seen in many different fields (including the sciences!). Since thesis-driven essays are prevalent across disciplines, you may see them referred to by different names: an analytical paper, an expository paper, or an argumentative paper.¹ The main purpose of a thesis-driven essay is to make an argument or prove a point. This “point” is explicitly articulated in your thesis statement, and the rest of your paper is structured around building evidence to support that thesis statement.²

Basic Structure of a Thesis-Driven Essay

Introduction

The purpose of an introduction is to gain the reader’s attention, provide necessary background information, and establish the essay’s thesis, or main idea.³ Depending on your rhetorical context, you can get the reader’s attention through a number of different methods. A quote or an anecdote may be appropriate in less formal writing whereas formal academic writing may start off with a statement of the significance of the work. Next, begin providing context for the reader, introducing broad topics that will be explored in the essay and then narrowing towards your thesis statement which is your main claim.⁴ Typically, the thesis will appear at the end of the introduction.

Example A⁵	Comments
Out-of-school youth have been a growing concern in the past decades. Compared to youth that receive proper education, those who do not stay in school are more likely to engage in risky events, such as smoking, illegal drug use, binge drinking, and many more (Lerman 1). ⁶ In addition, youth who do not attend schools are not equipped with the necessary skill sets to get employed or earn income (which means they will not be able to sustain themselves), as well as the essential lessons that are needed in life, such as	Hook: Explain the significance.

¹ Purdue University. “Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements.” *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html

² McDaniel College. “Thesis and Conclusions.” *Writing Center*. <https://writingcenter.mcdaniel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Thesis-and-conclusions.pdf>

³ James A. Glenn Writing Center. (2017). “Introductions and Conclusions for a Thesis-Driven Essay.” https://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/documents/intros_conclusions_102717_wc.pdf

⁴ James A. Glenn Writing Center. (2017). “Introductions and Conclusions for a Thesis-Driven Essay.” https://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/documents/intros_conclusions_102717_wc.pdf

⁵ “Solution Plans for Inclusive “At-Risk” Youth Education In Developing Countries.” (2021).

⁶ Lerman, Robert. (2004). “Programs to Support Out-of-School Youth.” U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, DOI: 10.13140/2.1.1018.4481

critical thinking, communicating, and problem-solving skills.	
Current conversations about inclusive youth education have surrounded the third and fourth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were proposed by the United Nations in 2015 in the attempt to achieve “prosperity and peace” by 2030 (Collodi 202). ⁷ (...) Relevant stakeholders, such as governmental groups and educators in the academic field, have researched the educational circumstances in developing countries, made recommendations about current education policies and laws, evaluated existing programs that serve the purpose of re-engaging youth learners, and identified current problems in the educational programs.	Additional context: Describe the status quo by presenting relevant and current research.
However, none of the researchers have proposed a new, detailed procedure that entails specifically how, when, and where the suggestions should be implemented. While the key problems in current youth education systems have been identified, it is still unclear to the policy makers or educators about what exactly they should do to contribute in achieving inclusive youth education. As they read through past research, they are likely to feel lost in the abundance of great ideas.	Incomplete, unsatisfactory, or inconclusive research: Identify a gap.
To solve the current issues regarding youth education, a well-developed plan that addresses the ways for schools/organizations to get funding and resources, the required qualifications and trainings for school faculty members, and a unique curriculum that is tailored towards meeting the “at-risk” youth’s needs will be a must in achieving inclusive youth education.	Thesis Statement: Articulate main claim and propose fulfillment of gap with current research.

Tips...

- Focus on the central idea.
- Create a content for your own research within the existing literature.
- Try writing the introduction last if you’re stuck!⁸

Body Paragraphs

The purpose of the body paragraphs is to provide evidence for your thesis and subclaims. One of the most important parts of your body paragraphs are the topic sentences (check out our handout on topic sentences!). In general, a topic sentence contains a portion of your thesis (subclaim) followed by your opinion and supporting evidence. Supporting sentences

⁷ Collodi, Jason, et al. (2021). How Do You Build Back Better So No One is Left Behind? Lessons From Sint Maarten, Dutch Caribbean, Following Hurricane Irma. *Disasters*. Retrieved from doi: 10.1111/disa.12423

⁸ James A. Glenn Writing Center. (2017). “Introductions and Conclusions for a Thesis-Driven Essay.” https://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/documents/intros_conclusions_102717_wc.pdf

include a mixture of evidence and analysis.⁹ Evidence can include examples, information from research, statistics, studies, etc. Evidence must be specifically targeted to your audience. After introducing the evidence, provide your own analysis to show how it directly supports your thesis (or subclaim).¹⁰ Lastly, include a concluding sentence that highlights what your subclaim adds to the research conversation.

Example B¹¹	Comments
Several existing educational programs have a common goal of aiding learners to be successful in the future. Some of these efforts have proven to be effective in improving youth's future.	Topic Sentence: <i>Establishes the focus and limits the scope of the paragraph.</i>
The MYEEP (Mayor's Youth Employment and Education Program) has been one of the more successful ones in helping youth. As a program that focuses on fostering "self-esteem, self-confidence, career awareness" and training students with the relevant employment skills, a student named David Lin has claimed that the program "changed his life" by showing him "awareness in the community, a sense of belonging, and provided opportunities to improve himself" (Fung et al. 252). ¹²	Evidence: <i>Examples and quotes.</i>
This proves that there is indeed a viable solution that can make a difference in these "at-risk" youth's lives.	Analysis: <i>How these examples support the thesis.</i>
While the kinds of youth that educational organizations accept may differ based on their purpose and goals, a comfortable and engaging learning environment that teaches them the useful skill sets they need to survive independently afterwards will be a general target to aim for in order to prepare them for future challenges.	Concluding Sentence: <i>Explains effect of subclaim on future action or solution.</i>

Tips¹³...

- Write with a purpose: avoid extra information that does not relate to the subclaim.
- Limit yourself to one idea per paragraph.
- Include counterarguments (within paragraphs or as separate paragraphs).

⁹ MasterClass. (2020). "How to Write a Strong Body Paragraph for an Essay." <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-body-paragraph-for-an-essay#what-are-the-components-of-a-body-paragraph>

¹⁰ MasterClass. (2020). "How to Write a Strong Body Paragraph for an Essay." <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-body-paragraph-for-an-essay#what-are-the-components-of-a-body-paragraph>

¹¹ "Solution Plans for Inclusive "At-Risk" Youth Education In Developing Countries." (2021).

¹² Fung, Polly Kam Yan, et al. (2007). "Youth empowerment: employing opportunities." Chinese America: History and Perspectives. Retrieved from link.gale.com/apps/doc/A161127981/AONE?u=cmu_main&sid=AONE&xid=cc303e9e

¹³ MasterClass. (2020). "How to Write a Strong Body Paragraph for an Essay." <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-body-paragraph-for-an-essay#what-are-the-components-of-a-body-paragraph>

- Be mindful of paragraph breaks: keep paragraphs to shorter than 1 full page.
- Find sources that support or challenge parts of your thesis and not necessarily the whole thesis.

Conclusion

The purpose of a conclusion is to explain the research backed outcomes, promote an action plan, explain the consequence of subclaims, as well as highlight relevance of the problem to audience members. They also provide you with an opportunity to remind your reader of your main argument and then relate your argument to a larger context. Part of this larger context includes explaining the importance or significance of your argument.¹⁴ Consider the following questions: What do you want your audience members to remember? What are the implications of your argument? Are there areas for further research?¹⁵

Example C¹⁶	Comments
To effectively bridge the gap between what stakeholders should do and the variety of existing recommendations from different researchers, this paper provides a well-developed plan that includes the key elements of an educational program.	Restatement of thesis: Reminding readers of the main point
By building on past sources that have meticulously assessed current programs and collected relevant participants' opinions on these issues, I have contributed to the current conversations about achieving inclusive youth education in developing countries with a new solution plan that details the options to receive financial support for schools, the required qualifications for teachers, and a curriculum that prioritizes the wellbeing of each other.	Larger Context: What this paper contributes to the ongoing conversation.
This proves that there is indeed a viable solution that can make a difference in these "at-risk" youth's lives.	Suggestions for the Future: How to extend this argument and research.

Tips...

- Conclusions are generally 15%-20% of the total paper length. This can vary by place of publication.
- It should not be a summary of your body paragraphs.¹⁷

¹⁴ McDaniel College. "Thesis and Conclusions." *Writing Center*. <https://writingcenter.mcdaniel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Thesis-and-conclusions.pdf>

¹⁵ James A. Glenn Writing Center. (2017). "Introductions and Conclusions for a Thesis-Driven Essay." https://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/documents/intros_conclusions_102717_wc.pdf

¹⁶ "Solution Plans for Inclusive "At-Risk" Youth Education In Developing Countries." (2021).

¹⁷ McDaniel College. "Thesis and Conclusions." *Writing Center*. <https://writingcenter.mcdaniel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Thesis-and-conclusions.pdf>