

Exercise walk-through

Writing a thesis statement ■ 6.4

eXercise

You must be able to

- write a thesis with a limiting clause that does real work
- avoid a qualification that empties the claim
- decide when a qualification belongs in the thesis and when in a paragraph
- test a qualified thesis for defensibility

Method — A limiting clause that works

“Later school start times help, **but only where transport can be rescheduled.**” The clause names the condition, so the reader knows exactly what is being claimed and what would refute it.

Method — Emptying the claim

“Later start times may help some students in some circumstances” claims nothing; there is no case it excludes. A qualification must still leave something at stake.

Method — Where to put it

A condition central to the argument belongs in the thesis. A minor exception belongs in the paragraph where it arises; putting it in the thesis makes the essay look narrower than it is.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what a good limiting clause does for the reader.

Solution 2.1

Method: A limiting clause that works

Worked steps

it names the condition under which the claim holds **B1**, so the reader knows what is claimed and what would refute it **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State the test of whether a qualification has emptied a claim.

Solution 2.2

Method: Emptying the claim

Worked steps

ask what case it excludes **B1**; if none, the qualification has emptied it **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

Thesis: “Congestion charging may possibly help in certain places.”

- (a) State the weakness.
- (b) Rewrite it as a qualified but defensible thesis.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

- (a) “may possibly” and “certain places” exclude nothing, so nothing is claimed **B1**.
- (b) a definite qualified claim, e.g. “Congestion charging reduces peak traffic where an alternative route exists, and raises hardship where it does not” **B2**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

A qualification belongs in the thesis when it is

- A** a minor exception
- B** a condition central to the argument
- C** unrelated
- D** the writer's opinion

Solution 3.1

Method: Where to put it

- A a minor exception
- B a condition central to the argument** 
- C unrelated
- D the writer's opinion

Worked steps

- B. central conditions define the claim itself.**

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

A claim that excludes no case has been

A properly qualified

B emptied

C strengthened

D narrowed usefully

Solution 3.2

Method: Emptying the claim

A properly qualified

B emptied 

C strengthened

D narrowed usefully

Worked steps

B. a claim that excludes nothing asserts nothing.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 2 marks

Prompt: “Should exam results decide university entry?”

- (a) Write a qualified thesis.
- (b) State what would refute it.

Solution 3.3

Method: A limiting clause that works

Worked steps

(a) a definite claim with a working limiting clause **B2**. (b) a stated condition or case that would show the claim false **B1**.