

2.6 Writing a thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to **write** a defensible thesis.

You must be able to:

- write a thesis that is disputable and specific
- avoid a thesis that merely restates the prompt
- signal a line of reasoning without listing paragraphs mechanically
- revise a weak thesis into a strong one

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Disputable and specific

A thesis someone could reasonably deny. "Technology has changed education" is not disputable. "Requiring cameras on in online classes trades a small gain in attention for a large loss of trust" is.

■ Not a restatement

If the prompt asks whether X is justified, "X is a complex issue with arguments on both sides" answers nothing. Take a position.

■ Signalling reasoning

A good thesis implies the shape of what follows without becoming a table of contents. "...because it changes who speaks, not only how much" points to the argument's structure in one clause.

■ Revising

Weak: "Social media has effects on teenagers." Strong: "Social media harms teenagers less by what it shows them than by what it replaces."

2 Practice

2.1 State two properties a strong thesis must have.

[2]

2.2 Explain why "there are arguments on both sides" fails as a thesis. [2]

2.3 Weak thesis: "Homework has advantages and disadvantages."

(a) State why it is weak. [1]

(b) Rewrite it as a defensible thesis. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Which is the strongest thesis? [1]

- **A** Museums are important to society.
 - **B** Museums have changed over time.
 - **C** Free entry changes who visits a museum more than how many.
 - **D** This essay will discuss museum funding.
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3.2 A thesis that lists three paragraph topics mechanically is weak mainly because it [1]

- **A** is too long
 - **B** substitutes an outline for an argument
 - **C** is disputable
 - **D** is too specific
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3.3 Prompt: "Should school start later for adolescents?"

(a) Write a defensible thesis. [2]

(b) State the clause in your thesis that signals the reasoning. [1]

4 Go further

- work through the **2.6 Writing a thesis statement** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Audience, Thesis, and Supporting Evidence** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 disputable —a reasonable reader could deny it; specific —it says something particular rather than general.

2.2 it takes no position, so nothing follows from it and there is nothing to defend.

2.3 (a) it takes no position and could preface any essay. (b) any defensible, specific rewrite, e.g. "Homework helps least where it is set to fill time rather than to practise a skill".

3.1 C. it is specific, disputable, and points to a line of reasoning.

3.2 B. an outline is not an argument.

3.3 (a) a specific, disputable position on the prompt. (b) the clause giving the reason or the mechanism, e.g. "because the cost falls on the students least able to change their own schedule".