

2.6 Writing a thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 18 marks**

KEY WORDS thesis 论点

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.

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

3.3 Prompt: “Should school start later for adolescents?”

- Write a defensible thesis. [2]
- State the clause in your thesis that signals the reasoning. [1]

3.4 Full free-response task. A school proposes to replace all end-of-year examinations with continuous coursework assessment. Supporters argue that coursework measures sustained work and reduces the harm of a single bad day; opponents argue that examinations are fairer because every student sits the same paper under the same conditions.

Write an essay that argues your own position on the proposal. Your thesis must be defensible and must not merely restate one side.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A** — Thesis (1), **Row B** — Evidence and Commentary (4), **Row C** — Sophistication (1).

[6]

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”.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). The point requires a claim that could be argued against and that stakes out a position of the writer’s own. **Earns it:** “Coursework should replace examinations only where the subject’s real work is cumulative; in subjects that assess recall under pressure, the examination is not a poor proxy for the skill but the skill itself.” **Does not:** “There are advantages and disadvantages to both sides” (no position), or “Coursework is better than exams” with no ground of judgment stated.

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). Evidence in an argument essay is the writer’s own — examples, analogies, hypotheticals, data the writer supplies — and the commentary must link each piece to the **line of reasoning**, not merely to the thesis. 4 points: at least two developed lines, each with evidence and explicit reasoning, and the relationship between them made clear. A common ceiling at 3 is an essay whose paragraphs are each individually sound but never say why one follows the other. 2: evidence present but commentary restates it. 1: assertion without evidence.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Earned by, for example, situating the argument in a **broadier context** (what the school believes assessment is for), or by carrying an alternative view genuinely rather than as a straw man — conceding that examinations do measure something real before limiting the concession. Vivid style alone never earns Row C.