

Exercise walk-through

Writing a thesis statement ■ 2.6

eXercise

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

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Method — Revising

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

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State two properties a strong thesis must have.

Solution 2.1

Worked steps

disputable — a reasonable reader could deny it **B1**; specific — it says something particular rather than general **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain why “there are arguments on both sides” fails as a thesis.

Solution 2.2

Method: Not a restatement

Worked steps

it takes no position **B1**, so nothing follows from it and there is nothing to defend **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

Weak thesis: “Homework has advantages and disadvantages.”

- (a) State why it is weak.
- (b) Rewrite it as a defensible thesis.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

(a) it takes no position and could preface any essay **B1**. (b) any defensible, specific rewrite, e.g. “Homework helps least where it is set to fill time rather than to practise a skill” **B2**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Which is the strongest thesis?

- 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.

Solution 3.1

- 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.

Worked steps

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

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

A thesis that lists three paragraph topics mechanically is weak mainly because it

- A** is too long
- B** substitutes an outline for an argument
- C** is disputable
- D** is too specific

Solution 3.2

Method: Signalling reasoning

- A is too long
- B substitutes an outline for an argument** 
- C is disputable
- D is too specific

Worked steps

B. an outline is not an argument.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 2 marks

Prompt: “Should school start later for adolescents?”

- (a) Write a defensible thesis.
- (b) State the clause in your thesis that signals the reasoning.

Solution 3.3

Method: Signalling reasoning

Worked steps

(a) a specific, disputable position on the prompt **B2**. (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” **B1**.