

Use the following checklist to strengthen and edit your thesis statement. For the purpose of the example below, the essay topic is if fine arts classes should be cut in high school.

1. Is your thesis statement a complete sentence?

Example thesis statement: Cutting fine arts classes.

Here, the reader is left wondering what you are talking about: what about cutting fine arts classes? Which fine arts classes? All of them? For what age group? For what purpose? This is a dependent clause, and therefore an incomplete sentence. A thesis statement has to be a complete sentence.

2. Is your thesis a statement and not a question?

Example thesis statement: Would one benefit be the cutting of fine arts classes, to meet the lifestyle skills young adolescents need when they go off to college, who may have to live on their own and don't know how to budget?

Answering a question with a question is not a thesis statement. The purpose of your assignment is to take a stand on the topic, so you must write a statement that ends with a period, not a question mark.

3. Does your thesis avoid general statements or clichés?

Example thesis statement: I believe that cutting fine arts classes would be beneficial to me because I need to learn about budgeting.

This is a very personal response to the topic. A college paper requires students to back their thesis statement with research. While you should write about a topic that interests you, avoid putting a personal voice on the topic. Personal opinions are inappropriate and unsupportable in research papers.

4. Does your thesis relate to your topic?

Example thesis statement: Cutting fine arts classes is neat because I could learn many tools in a budgeting class.

Here cutting fine arts classes is mentioned, but there is not a clear connection between it being "neat" and how it benefits high schools, the original topic. Also, while it is good that "I could learn many tools in a budgeting class", it is unclear what tools and how they would be beneficial. The position and topic are still too vague and do not connect.

Thesis Statement Checklist

5. Is your thesis statement clear and specific? Is it still broad? How could you make it narrower?

Example thesis statement: Cutting fine arts classes benefits individuals with a variety of lifestyle concerns for when they go on to college.

This would be classified as a working thesis. It is still vague, but more direct. To narrow it further, you should ask yourself the 5-W questions: Who? What? Where? Why? How?

6. Does your thesis statement use formal language?

Example thesis statement: Cutting fine arts classes benefits individuals with a variety of lifestyle concerns for when they need to leave their homestead and venture out into the world.

Here, the cliché of leaving the homestead is ineffective and informal. Do not use clichés or informal language. They weaken your thesis statement.

Example of an Effective Thesis Statement:

In the graduation year of high school, students should be given the option to take lifestyle skills classes, such as financial support or budgeting, instead of fine arts classes; this meets the changing lifestyle needs of individuals who will live on their own during post-secondary education.

Need help developing your thesis and argument? Contact the writing specialist for support!

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