

Thesis Statement Example for Argumentative Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Recognize an arguable thesis

Below are some of the key features of an argumentative thesis statement.

An argumentative thesis is . . .

Debatable

An argumentative thesis must make a claim about which reasonable people can disagree. Statements of fact or areas of general agreement cannot be argumentative theses because few people disagree about them.

EXAMPLE

Junk food is bad for your health is not a debatable thesis. Most people would agree that junk food is bad for your health.

Because junk food is bad for your health, the size of sodas offered at fast-food restaurants should be regulated by the federal government is a debatable thesis. Reasonable people could agree or disagree with the statement.

Assertive

An argumentative thesis takes a position, asserting the writer's stance. Questions, vague statements, or quotations from others are not an argumentative thesis because they do not assert the writer's viewpoint.

EXAMPLE

Federal immigration law is a tough issue about which many people disagree is not an arguable thesis because it does not assert a position.

Federal immigration enforcement law needs to be overhauled because it puts undue constraints on state and local police is an argumentative thesis because it asserts a position that immigration enforcement law needs to be changed.

Reasonable

An argumentative thesis must make a claim that is logical and possible. Claims that are outrageous or impossible are not argumentative thesis.

EXAMPLE

City council members stink and should be thrown in jail is not an argumentative thesis. City council members' ineffectiveness is not a reason to send them to jail.

City council members should be term limited to prevent one group or party from maintaining control indefinitely is an arguable thesis because term limits are possible, and shared political control is a reasonable goal.

Evidence Based

An argumentative thesis must be able to be supported by evidence. Claims that presuppose value systems, morals, or religious beliefs cannot be supported with evidence and therefore are not argumentative theses.

EXAMPLE

Individuals convicted of murder will go to hell when they die is not an argumentative thesis because its support rests on religious beliefs or values rather than evidence.

Rehabilitation programs for individuals serving life sentences should be funded because these programs reduce violence within prisons is an argumentative thesis because evidence such as case studies and statistics can be used to support it.

Focused

An argumentative thesis must be focused and narrow. A focused, narrow claim is clearer, more able to be supported with evidence, and more persuasive than a broad, general claim.

EXAMPLE

The federal government should overhaul the U.S. tax code is not an effective argumentative thesis because it is too general (What part of the government? Which tax codes? What sections of those tax codes?) and would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to be fully supported.

The U.S. House of Representative should vote to repeal the federal estate tax because the revenue generated by that tax is negligible is an effective argumentative thesis because it identifies a specific actor and action and can be fully supported with evidence about the amount of revenue the estate tax generates.