

Exercises for

Tutorial 28. Argument One: Topics, Introductions, and Thesis Statements

Exercise 1

Instructions: For each numbered item below, choose *one* of the possible topics and explain why it would be the better choice for a short persuasive essay. Consider whether the topics are *controversial* enough and *narrow* enough to be discussed in a short (3-8 pages) essay. *Select one; then type or write your explanation in the answer box.*

1. ☐ Possible topic A: Drugs
☐ Possible topic B: The legalization of marijuana

Explain your choice:

2. ☐ Possible topic A: Do school athletics detract from academic performance?
☐ Possible topic B: Sports in college and high school

Explain your choice:

3. ☐ Possible topic A: Scientific research
☐ Possible topic B: Testing on laboratory animals

Explain your choice:

Exercise 2

Instructions: Choose *one* topic from the list below that you will work with throughout the rest of this tutorial. You may also write a topic of your own in the space provided, or, if you are currently working on a persuasive essay topic for one of your classes, you may write this topic in the space. *Type or write in the answer boxes.*

NOTE: Remember to try and pick something that you have some background knowledge about—at least an understanding of why people disagree about this issue.

- human cloning
- abortion
- English as the official language of the US
- high stakes testing (for example, requiring high school seniors to pass a standardized test before they graduate)
- gun control

- sex education in high schools
- high school or college students working while going to school
- euthanasia
- censoring internet pornography

Topic:

Why is the topic you have chosen a good topic to focus on?

Exercise 3

Instructions: Narrow down the topic you chose in the previous exercise by writing out some possible questions. When you have listed at least three questions your issue raises, pick one that you believe you can focus on in a short essay.

Example:

Issue: Removing books parents consider offensive from my high school's library

Questions:

1. Would removing the books violate free speech?
2. Should parents (rather than teachers, librarians, or students) be the only ones to make decisions?
3. What makes a book "offensive" enough to be removed? Do all parents of students in the school agree on this?

Question at issue: *Should parents be the only ones to make decisions?*

Type or write in the answer boxes.

Your Issue (from Exercise 2):

Questions your issue raises (3):

Question at issue that you will focus on (remember this can be any of the above—choose the one that you think you will be able to say the most about):

Exercise 4

Instructions: For each numbered item below, indicate whether the statement is

- an *open* thesis—if it makes a direct point but does not provide reasons why;
- a *closed* thesis—if it both provides the major point and indicates at least one major reason for that point; or
- *not* a thesis—if it does not take a stance on an issue. Be sure to indicate how you know.

Select your choice; then type or write in its answer box.

1. Community colleges, because they provide students with smaller classes, more individual attention, and often more experienced teachers, may be a better choice than large state institutions for a student's first two years of higher education.

☐ closed thesis ☐ open thesis ☐ not a thesis

How you know:

2. The original “Star Wars” is one of the highest grossing movies of all time.

☐ closed thesis ☐ open thesis ☐ not a thesis

How you know:

3. Children should not be allowed to watch more than thirty minutes of television a day.

☐ closed thesis ☐ open thesis ☐ not a thesis

How you know:

4. Because they are generally designed and proposed by advanced countries such as the United States, free trade agreements often do more harm than good for developing countries such as Nigeria.

☐ closed thesis ☐ open thesis ☐ not a thesis

How you know:

5. The city of San Jose cannot afford a professional football team.

☐ closed thesis ☐ open thesis ☐ not a thesis

How you know:

Exercise 5

Instructions: Return to the “question at issue” you wrote as your own at the end of Exercise 3. Create both an open and a closed thesis statement in response to the question at issue. You will probably need to do some brainstorming to create a closed thesis—try to come up with good reasons for your claim:

Example:

Question at issue: *Should bilingual ballots no longer be allowed in California?*

Open thesis: *Bilingual ballots must continue to be a part of our democratic system in California.*

Closed thesis: *To avoid eliminating the democratic rights and responsibilities of hundreds of thousands of legal California citizens, we must continue to allow bilingual ballots.*

Type or write in the answer boxes.

Your Question at Issue (from Exercise 3):

Open thesis:

Closed thesis: