Thesis statement checklist

Use this page every time you write a thesis, in class or on an AP practice essay.

Three tests for any thesis

1. Could a reasonable reader disagree with it? If not, it's a fact, and there's nothing to prove.
2. Is it specific? Name the text, the writer's choice, the policy or the cause.
3. Can you defend it with the evidence in front of you? On AP English essays, a thesis is defensible if the text or sources contain at least some evidence that could support it.

Warning signs of a weak thesis

- It begins "This essay will talk about..."
- It says something has "pros and cons" without choosing a side.
- It lists devices (ethos, pathos, logos) without saying what they achieve.
- It repeats the wording of the prompt.
- It claims more than your evidence can support.

The formula

Although [counterpoint], [claim], because [reason 1] and [reason 2].

Part	Your notes
Claim	
Reason 1	
Reason 2	
Counterpoint	
Full thesis	

Leave out the "although" part if your claim works without it.

AP English thesis check (Row A, 0 or 1 point)

- Does it answer the exact prompt?
- Does it take a defensible position (AP Lang argument and synthesis), analyze the writer's choices (AP Lang rhetorical analysis) or offer a defensible interpretation (AP Lit)?
- Is it more than a restatement of the prompt or a summary?
- Is it at the end of your introduction, where the reader will find it fastest?

Source: College Board AP English Language and AP English Literature scoring guidelines. Last checked: November 17, 2026.