READING AND WRITING ASSESSMENT

Writing a central claim

Part 2 of the assessment asks you to read a short passage and write a response, in your own words, that states its central claim and one supporting reason. This handout shows you how to write both clearly.

What a central claim is

The central claim is the main point an author argues for. Everything else in the passage tries to support it. Your first sentence should restate that claim clearly.

A strong central-claim sentence is:

Specific	It names exactly what the author argues.
Complete	It is a full sentence, not just a topic.
Accurate	It says what the author says, without adding your own opinion.
Your own words	It is not copied from the passage.

Weak and strong examples

Sentence	Why
The passage is about reading.	Weak. It names a topic, not a claim.
Reading is important.	Weak. It is too general and does not say what the author argues.
The author argues that patient, repeated reading leads to more reliable understanding than fast reading.	Strong. It is specific, complete, accurate, and in the writer's own words.

Putting the claim in your own words

1. Read the passage until you understand it.
2. Look away from the text.
3. Write the claim the way you would explain it to someone else.
4. Compare your sentence with the passage and correct any change in meaning.
5. If you used three or more words in a row from the passage, rewrite that part.

Changing a few words is not enough. Change the structure of the sentence as well, and keep the meaning the same.

Adding one supporting reason

After the claim, give one reason the author offers, also in your own words. A simple pattern:

> The author argues that _____. One reason the author gives is that _____.

Sample response

Based on the practice passage in Handout 1, "Finding the main idea."

> The author argues that patient, repeated reading leads to more reliable understanding than reading quickly. One reason the author gives is that rereading uncovers small details, such as a limiting phrase or a shift in tone, that can alter what the entire passage means.

Before you submit

- [ ] My first sentence states the author's claim, not just the topic.
- [ ] I wrote the claim in my own words.
- [ ] I gave one reason the author offers.
- [ ] I did not add my own opinion.
- [ ] I reread my response for grammar and punctuation.