

BOX 1.4 Twelve Tests of an Arguable Issue.**DO YOU HAVE AN ARGUABLE ISSUE?**

If you cannot answer yes to all of these questions, change or modify your issue.

Your issue (phrased as a question): _____

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|-----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 1. Is this an issue that has not been resolved or settled? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 2. Does this issue potentially inspire two or more views? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 3. Are you willing to consider a position different from your own and perhaps even modify your views on this issue? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 4. Are you sufficiently interested and engaged with this issue to inspire your audience to become interested also? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 5. Do other people perceive this as an issue? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 6. Is this issue significant enough to be worth your time? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 7. Is this a safe issue for you? Not too risky? Scary? Will you be willing to express your ideas? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 8. Will you be able to establish common ground with your audience on this issue—common terms, common background and values? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 9. Can you get information and come up with convincing insights on this issue? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 10. Can you eventually get a clear and limited focus on this issue, even if it is a complicated one? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 11. Is it an enduring issue, or can you build perspective by linking it to an enduring issue? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 12. Can you predict some audience outcomes? (Think of your classmates as the audience. Will they be convinced? Hostile? Neutral? Attentive? Remember, any outcomes at all can be regarded as significant in argument.) |

**'A' IS FOR 'ABSENT'***

Chris Piper

Chris Piper was a broadcast journalism major at the University of Texas at Arlington when he wrote this essay for the student newspaper, for which he also worked as a proofreader.

- 1 **L**ast semester, I enrolled in one of the most dreaded courses in any communication degree plan. Most save it until the very end of their college career, but I took it as a sophomore.

*Chris Piper, "'A' is for 'Absent,'" *Shorthorn*, October 21, 2003, p. 3.

- 2 Remarkably, I did very well on all of the tests. Also, the professor gave me
high marks on almost every project. But when final grades came out, I ended up
with a “C.” My absences dropped my average more than 10 points. Admittedly,
I earned the grade given to me. The syllabus clearly stated what would occur if
I missed more than my allotted “freebies.”
- 3 But my refusal to attend class does not excuse policies that subvert the value
of learning and education, emphasizing attendance instead.
- 4 Professors who implement attendance policies often argue, “If this were a job,
and you failed to show up, you would be fired.” There is, however, one big differ-
ence between going to work versus going to class.
- 5 A job pays for my service, but I pay my professors for their services. I spend
plenty of money on my education, and my choice to fully take advantage of the
expense is exactly that—my choice.
- 6 When evaluating superior standardized test scores, such as what one might
make on the SAT and ACT, admissions officers don’t ask whether students at-
tended prep courses before the exam. Obviously, a high score denotes that a test
taker knows the material.
- 7 I truly believe most professors want their students to score well, which is why
they implement attendance policies. I am touched by the sentiment. But if miss-
ing class leads to poor results by traditional grading methods—tests, quizzes, pro-
jects, etc.—then so be it. The student body could use some winnowing out.
- 8 I imagine a few instructors adopt attendance policies to stroke their own
egos—to ensure a crowd is present when they enlighten the eager masses. But
I’m arguing the validity of such rules regardless of any questionable motives. If a
student can earn good grades on required work without attending class, then in-
structors should grade that student accordingly.
- 9 I encourage professors to give pop quizzes in place of attendance policies. At
the very least, a quiz measures comprehension of pertinent material. Of course,
such a change would mean more work for professors.
- 10 But that’s what students are paying for.

FOR DISCUSSION: What is the issue? What is the author’s position on the issue? What reasons and evidence are given to support the author’s position? What are the strengths and weaknesses in this argument? What is your position on this issue? How much common ground do you share with your instructor on this issue?

- b. *Write a short essay on a campus issue.* Select the campus issue that interests or aggravates you the most, apply the twelve tests in Box 1.4, and write a 250- to 300-word argument about it. Write a title that identifies your issue. Then make a statement (a claim) that explains your position on the issue, and add reasons and evidence to convince a college official to accept your views and perhaps take action to improve the situation.