

# BALANCED DISCUSSION



# WHAT IS A BALANCED DISCUSSION?

*A balanced discussion looks at different points of view on an issue, providing arguments for and against. It presents a balanced set of arguments without leaning one way or the other.*

When writing a balanced discussion, it is important to remember that it doesn't matter whether you are for or against the issue to begin with. You must present both sides of the argument fairly. Then, in the final paragraph, after balancing both sides of the discussion, you can state which side you agree with.



Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

Learning Objective: To use similar writing models for their own writing.

Learning Outcome: I can identify the features of a balanced discussion.

# What Makes a Good Balanced Discussion?

A good balanced discussion contains many key features:

- title (often a question)
- an introduction
- present tense
- view in favour
- view against
- supporting evidence
- statistics
- conjunctions
- rhetorical question
- third person
- concluding paragraph (written in first person)
- formal language

*Which of the key features can you identify? Highlight and annotate the key features.*

*Let's look at an example. Here is a balanced discussion about whether homework should be banned.*

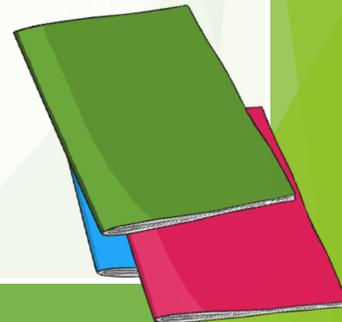
*You may already have an opinion but wait until you've heard both sides of the argument before making your final choice!*



# Should Homework Be Banned?

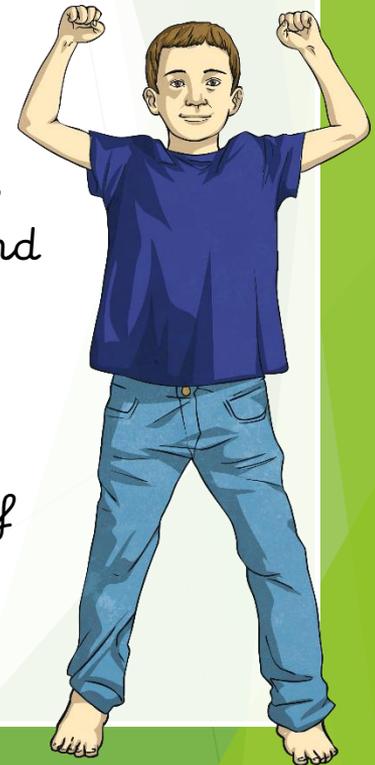
Anyone who has ever been to school knows what it is like to be sent home with piles of homework. For years, teachers have been setting extra maths, spellings and other assignments to be completed outside of regular lesson times. With the increasing pressures of modern day life, there is a growing call for homework to be banned. These are the issues which I would like to discuss today.

Many people see homework as an important part of school life; it has become an extension of the lesson. Indeed, it is estimated that more than 95% of secondary school teachers set regular homework assignments. If the teacher cannot fit everything that is needed to be taught into the lesson, then being able to set homework is essential. This way, pupils can continue their learning at home which in turn helps their understanding and knowledge of the subject. In fact, recent research shows a positive link between the amount children do for homework and their achievement levels.



On the other hand, it has been argued that children should be entitled to a break from learning. After spending all day at school, a few hours 'downtime' spent watching television, playing computer games or exercising outside is essential for a healthy, fun-loving child. In fact, the government's own health guidelines recommend people aged between the age of five and eighteen should exercise for at least sixty minutes a day. Where are children going to fit that in if they are busy doing homework every evening?

While there are a lot of people that understand that argument, the fact remains that children go to school to be educated and many parents welcome the chance to support their child's education at home. Practising spelling or helping their child read gives parents the opportunity to play a part in their child's learning; it also gives them a clearer understanding of how their child is progressing. Similarly, a lot of children enjoy doing homework with their parents. Why introduce a blanket ban if some children and parents actually enjoy it?



The flip side of the argument is that many parents feel overwhelmed with the amount of homework their child brings home. With so many after school activities and clubs on offer, parents and carers often feel there is not enough time to fit everything in. Furthermore, due to ever-increasing government expectations, adults sometimes feel unable to help their child as the work is too hard or on a subject matter they are not familiar with.

In conclusion, there are many strong arguments for and against banning homework from schools. If it helps a child's education, then surely homework is a good thing. On balance, I do not believe homework should be banned because it really is an important part of learning. However, I also believe there should still be time in the day for fun as play is incredibly important to a child's well-being. I believe that schools should come up with a compromise - they should keep homework but ensure that there is a minimal amount.

# Should Homework Be Banned?

What do  
you think?

Did you  
change  
your mind?



Which argument was  
stronger?  
After reading both sides  
of the argument, what  
do your class think?



Tuesday 24th November 2020

Learning Objective: To plan writing effectively.

Learning Outcome: I can research issues for my writing.

# Our Balanced Argument

We are going to write about whether or not shops should only be allowed to sell Fairtrade chocolate.



We are going to research the arguments for and against.

Should shops only be allowed to sell Fairtrade chocolate?

*Read all of the information on Fairtrade and think about some points for both side of the discussion*

*Should shops only be allowed to sell Fairtrade chocolate?*

YES

NO



# FAIRTRADE



Fairtrade is all about making things fairer for the people in developing countries who grow and harvest the food we eat. It is a global movement which is represented in the UK by the Fairtrade Foundation; you will have seen their distinctive logo on many supermarket products. When you spot it, it means that the ingredients in the product have been sourced in a way that does not damage the environment, and that all the workers who helped produce the product have been paid fairly and enjoy decent working conditions. As well as paying fair prices, companies that use the Fairtrade mark also contribute towards making life better for the people they are trading with, by giving money for things like schools, water pumps and health clinics - without them having to work their fingers to the bone just to afford bare essentials.

Fairtrade is a response to traditional trading arrangements which can be very unfair. Often, shops and businesses in first world countries such as the UK can take advantage of workers in developing countries who have very little money to put into their community or business, but badly need to sell their product. This means that farmers and other labourers have no say in their own futures and are often taken advantage of. Long working days, back-breaking labour and poor pay are just a few of the ways workers can be exploited.

The idea of Fairtrade has been around for a long time. The first 'Fairtrade' shop opened in 1958 in the USA, and Oxfam UK started to sell crafts made by Chinese refugees at around the same time. Similar stores began opening around the world, and the big businesses and supermarkets caught on to the idea during the 1990s.

One product you might often see marked as 'Fairtrade' is chocolate. It is one of the UK's most popular treats, and millions of people around the world depend on its production for their livelihood. It is a sad state of affairs that most of the time, farmers are paid very little for their cocoa beans, despite them being sold for a great deal more afterwards.

With Fairtrade, producers are guaranteed a minimum price for their cocoa beans which will cover their costs as well as let them invest back into their businesses, improving the quality of their product and the production process. For many workers in developing countries, it means the difference between living in poverty and looking forward to a sustainable future.





# FAIRTRADE



## ***It promotes a better wage system***

Fairtrade cooperatives offer remarkably higher wages for workers than what the general market supports on a local basis. Many cooperatives also make investments within local communities to support their workers, including modern medical care, schooling options, and the teaching of sustainable food growing practices.

## ***There are better working conditions***

Comforts are also provided by the Fairtrade model by cooperatives and providers. Many workers are able to work in conditions that exceed local standards and worker safety is often a top priority. Dangerous chemicals and other substances are not allowed by the production model, which helps to protect families as they work and grow up.

## ***Discrimination is not allowed***

Workers in a Fairtrade cooperative are free from discrimination which allows for equal job opportunities that may not always be available to local workers.

## ***Child labour can be reduced***

Fairtrade practices help to eliminate the need for child labour because workers earn fair wages and that lessens the need of families to make their children work to help support the household.

## ***Social conditions improve***

Better business education has led to higher levels of profitability while safety and health improvements have been made simultaneously. Farming practices have become more efficient, creating higher yields with less effort. In return, a higher standard of living has been achieved.

## ***Small business owners can be competitive***

Small cooperatives and business owners who became certified as Fair Trade can become instantly competitive with large businesses on the international stage. This means large scale buyers are unable to exploit workers or force competitive cooperatives out of business because pricing and distribution is handled equally.

## ***Organic techniques are often used***

In the Fairtrade world organic techniques are used almost 100% of the time, creating a sustainable growing pattern that the environment is able to support year after year.

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# FAIRTRADE



## ***Fairtrade can create divides***

*Fairtrade cooperatives can create divides within a community because some workers may not qualify to be part of the cooperative and may not receive the many benefits that coop workers are able to receive.*

## ***There are very high fees to join the scheme***

*In order for an organisation, an individual, or a cooperative to become certified as Fairtrade, they must undergo a costly and rigorous examination period. There are joining fees that must be paid if accepted and there are annual fees that must be paid to maintain that certification.*

*The cost can be upwards of several thousand dollars, which can put the price of Fairtrade membership out of reach for many workers.*

## ***Higher prices are paid by customers***

*As the fees for cooperatives are high and because workers earn competitive rates, Fairtrade products have a premium price associated with them when compared to 'regular' products that fall outside of this type of market. The higher prices are paid by consumers who may themselves be living in poverty.*

## ***Product choice is very limited***

*There are two primary products people purchase when it comes to Fairtrade goods: chocolate and coffee. Although there are numerous other goods that are available for sale, these niche products have a limited market. This means that eventually there won't be demand for what is being created and this could endanger jobs and even the existence of the cooperative itself.*

## ***Not all costs go to the suppliers***

*Fair Trade costs are partially so high because there are higher administration costs at the retail level that occur. These additional costs aren't passed along to the cooperatives. Worker exploitation is still occurring.*

## ***There is no drive to work hard***

*If there is a guaranteed minimum price, then there is no real motivation for workers to work hard or to improve the efficiencies of production processes. Ultimately, this means the consumer is paying more for something without just cause.*



Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Learning Objective: To build cohesion within and across paragraphs.

Learning Outcome: I can use conjunctions to develop points in my discussion.

# Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words which help to build cohesion. They can be used to introduce a point, to develop a point further, to give the opposing viewpoint or to finish off a viewpoint. Decide which of these conjunctions could be used for introducing, developing, opposing or concluding a viewpoint.

Firstly	Secondly	On the one hand	As a result	Because
Consequently	Due to	For this reason	Hence	Thus
In consequence	In order to	In this way	Otherwise	An outcome of
Since	So that	Subsequently	Therefore	Although
Though	Even though	While	On the other hand	However
Despite this	Nevertheless	Otherwise	On balance	In conclusion

Sort the conjunctions according to their function.  
Can you think of any further conjunctions to  
add to any of the groups?

Introducing a  
viewpoint

Developing a  
viewpoint

Opposing a  
viewpoint

Introducing a  
viewpoint

Which conjunctions could you use in this passage?

It is part of a balanced discussion.

Should primary school children have to wear uniform?

\_\_\_\_\_, children should not be penalised or bullied because of their clothing. Many families cannot afford the most up-to-date and trendy clothing and when everyone wears the same clothing, this risk is eradicated. \_\_\_\_\_, wearing uniform takes the stress away from children who may feel pressured to wear the latest trends. \_\_\_\_\_, school uniforms certainly look smart which gives a good impression to visitors to the school.

\_\_\_\_\_, many people believe that wearing a uniform takes away a child's own identity as you cannot show your true self when you are wearing the same as everyone else.

\_\_\_\_\_, some types of uniform can be restrictive and impractical whereas if you were allowed to choose your own clothing, you could tailor it to the activities in which you would be participating.

# Conjunctions

Use a conjunction to start a new sentence which *supports* the viewpoint of the first sentence.

- a) Fairtrade farmers need to be paid a living wage.
- b) It is worth buying Fairtrade Products, even when they cost a little bit more.
- c) Fairtrade guarantees farmers a fair price for their product.
- d) Choosing Fairtrade products means that the consumer is helping someone less fortunate than themselves.

# Conjunctions

Use a conjunction to start a new sentence which **opposes** the viewpoint of the first sentence.

- a) People hold power in their shopping choices.
- b) Shops will stock what customers choose to buy.
- c) Fairtrade encourages sustainable farming.
- d) Educating children about Fairtrade will help bring about change in unfair world trade laws.