

Bell Time Debate

Study how an argument builds from a focused claim to a rebuttal.

9.W.2 "Organization and Composition Plan and organize writing to address a specific audience and purpose using the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing)..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the thesis statement, circle every transition, and number each sentence that gives evidence, presents an opposing view, or gives a rebuttal. These marks show how the argument stays organized and supported.

A Later First Bell

- ① High schools should begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. because later start times better match teen sleep needs and can improve learning. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later. Teenagers' body clocks often shift later during puberty, making it difficult for many students to fall asleep early. As a result, a student who must catch a bus before sunrise may arrive tired even after trying to follow a reasonable bedtime. A schedule designed around adolescent biology would give students a stronger chance to arrive alert, prepared, and ready to participate.
- ② Research supports this position. In a 2018 study of two Seattle high schools, median sleep duration on school nights increased by 34 minutes after the start time moved nearly an hour later. Median biology grades were 77.5 percent before the schedule change and 82 percent afterward, a difference of 4.5 percentage points. This study does not prove that a later bell alone raises every student's grade, since homework, teaching, and other factors also matter. However, the added sleep and improved grades suggest that schedules may affect conditions for learning. Therefore, school leaders should examine local attendance, transportation, and sleep data before setting a start time.

- ③ Critics argue that later starts could complicate bus routes, sports, and family schedules. Those concerns deserve attention, especially in districts that share buses among several schools. Yet inconvenience is not a reason to ignore health evidence. A district can survey families, consult transportation staff, and use schedule models before making a change. It might shift elementary and high school times gradually or try a pilot schedule for one year. In contrast, keeping an early schedule without reviewing its effects leaves students carrying the cost of chronic sleep loss. With careful planning and public feedback, a later high school start is a practical, evidence-based choice.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What is the writer's thesis statement?

- 2 What two numerical findings from the Seattle study support the writer's position? Explain how they support it.

- 3 What relationship does the transition "Therefore" show in paragraph 2?

- 4 What counterargument does the writer address in paragraph 3, and how does the writer rebut it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a realistic school policy. Plan briefly, then write one 120-150-word paragraph to your principal with a clear thesis, two specific pieces of evidence, at least two transitions, a counterargument and rebuttal, and one source you would consult before a decision. Revise and edit directly. Exclude planning notes from the word count.

1. Plan the argument

Note your claim, two supports, an objection/response and a source to consult.

2. Write, revise and edit

Write one 120-150-word paragraph. Check evidence, transitions and conventions.

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PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the thesis statement, circle every transition, and number each sentence that gives evidence, presents an opposing view, or gives a rebuttal. These marks show how the argument stays organized and supported. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's thesis statement?	High schools should begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. because later start times better match teen sleep needs and can improve learning.
2	What two numerical findings from the Seattle study support the writer's position? Explain how they support it.	Median sleep duration on school nights increased by 34 minutes, and median biology grades differed by 4.5 percentage points (77.5 percent before and 82 percent afterward). These associated changes support investigating later starts; they do not prove that schedule alone caused the grade increase.
3	What relationship does the transition "Therefore" show in paragraph 2?	It signals that the recommendation for school leaders to examine local data follows from the research evidence discussed before it.
4	What counterargument does the writer address in paragraph 3, and how does the writer rebut it?	The counterargument is that later starts could complicate bus routes, sports, and family schedules. The rebuttal is that districts can survey families, consult transportation staff, use schedule models, and try gradual or pilot changes.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Plan: Audience: principal. Claim: assess a covered rack. Supports: CDC activity guidance and EPA lower-emission travel guidance. Objection: cost and demand. Response: survey and a limited pilot.

Revised paragraph: To the principal, our school should consider a covered bicycle rack near the main entrance. First, CDC recommends at least sixty minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous activity for people ages six through seventeen. For students with suitable routes, cycling to school can contribute to that goal. Second, EPA explains that driving fewer miles reduces vehicle emissions and suggests walking or biking when possible. A rack could support students who already choose those options. Some may object that covered storage would be expensive and little used. However, the school could price a small rack and consult its transportation survey before deciding. If demand justifies the cost, staff could test one rack for a semester and count use. Therefore, I recommend assessing routes, demand and costs before approving this practical change.

Review note: I made approval depend on local routes, demand and costs. I checked the source names, transitions and punctuation.

Require the complete one-paragraph argument and a named source to consult. Accept varied supported policies. The model uses CDC activity guidance and EPA travel guidance; route suitability and demand must be assessed locally. The Seattle study reports a median school-night sleep increase, not a mean increase or a result for every night. Grade changes are associations. Sources:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30547089/> ;

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/134/3/642/74175/School-Start-Times-for-Adolescents> ;

<https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/children.html> ;

<https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/what-you-can-do-reduce-pollution-vehicles-and> .