

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, students slept an average of 34 minutes longer after their start time moved nearly an hour later. Their median grades rose by 4.5 percent, according to the researchers. 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 show that schedules can affect students' ability to learn. 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 and write a 120-150-word paragraph to your principal that argues for it. Include a clear thesis, two specific pieces of evidence, at least two transitions, a counterargument with a rebuttal, and one source you would consult before making the decision.

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.	Students slept an average of 34 minutes longer, and their median grades rose by 4.5 percent. These findings suggest that later starts can increase sleep and may improve students' ability to learn.
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)

To the principal, our school should place a covered bike rack near the main entrance. First, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that young people ages 6 through 17 get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. A secure rack could help students who choose an active trip to school. Second, the Environmental Protection Agency reports that transportation produced 28 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. When a student bikes instead of taking a short car ride, that choice can reduce vehicle use. Some people may argue that a covered rack would cost too much and serve few students. However, the school could begin with a small rack and count its use for one semester. I would consult the school transportation survey to estimate demand. Therefore, a covered rack is a practical improvement.

Accept accurate paraphrases that identify the thesis, evidence, transition relationship, counterargument, and rebuttal. For the open response, accept varied policies if the paragraph meets the word range and includes all required argument elements.