

Example of balanced argument

Should mobile phones be banned in schools?

In the last few years there has been an explosion in the use of new communications technologies, including mobile phones; it is estimated that over 70% of young people aged 10-14 now own one. Considerable debate has taken place in the press recently as to whether pupils should be allowed to take their mobile phones into school.

No one can deny the positive benefits of children communicating freely with each other, and pupils argue that using a mobile phone to talk to or text-message their friends is simply one way of doing this, using new technology. Many parents are in favour too, and like the reassurance of knowing their child can be safer and more independent if they have a mobile phone, since they can contact them at any time if necessary. They cite potential risks faced by some children travelling alone.

However, schools point out that carrying a mobile phone could in itself make a child more vulnerable to theft or mugging, both on the street and even in the playground: Police figures confirm that a high proportion of crimes committed against young people involve thefts of mobile phones. Schools are concerned, moreover, that allowing pupils to bring their mobiles to school could create a competitive atmosphere amongst children and result in some children feeling left out and undervalued. In addition they claim that pupils' education would be affected by the distraction of phones ringing in class.

Some doctors fear that children using mobiles could suffer long-term brain damage. Until this is disproved, it would seem that schools might best protect their pupils from this and other problems by making them leave their mobile phones at home.



## Has the time come to ban cars from the centre of towns and cities?

Global warming caused by pollution has begun to affect us directly, with climate change starting to affect British weather. Some people believe the time has come for drastic action to reduce pollution caused by heavy traffic.

There is no doubt that traffic fumes are a major cause of pollution throughout the developed world, and are a particular problem in large towns and cities. In a small country like the UK, cities are close enough together to cause high levels of traffic fume pollution in the air over large areas of the land. Consequently, health problems are created such as asthma, which has rapidly increased as the number of cars on the road has risen. An additional problem in urban areas is congestion, which wastes time and adds to costs. The average speed of traffic in central London is now only 12 miles per hour, the same as it was in Victorian times. A ban on cars in the centre of large towns and cities would therefore seem sensible as it would cut pollution thereby improving health. It would also reduce congestion, allowing buses, emergency vehicles and delivery trucks to be more efficient.

On the other hand, it could be argued that such a ban would create other problems. Public transport in this country is expensive and sometimes unreliable. Would there be enough trains and buses to cope with the numbers needing them? Furthermore, there is also the issue of personal freedom. Is it right to prevent people from choosing the mode of transport they prefer? Many people feel safer in their cars when travelling at night than they do on a bus or a train.

While there is clearly an urgent need to cut pollution, this could be achieved by developing cleaner fuels and electrically powered cars, and encouraging people to use public transport where possible, rather than forcing them to do so.



## School Uniforms – Good or Bad?

Ever since they were introduced in Victorian times, school uniforms have been a contentious subject. In this discussion text I will look at both sides of the argument – why some teachers love them, and why most kids don't.

Supporters of school uniform argue that fashionable clothes, and arguing about whose clothes are nicer, can distract children from their schoolwork. In addition, they say that school uniform makes everyone look the same, whereas if you let children wear their own clothes it would be obvious whose parents had lots of money and whose did not. The poorer children might get bullied, they claim. Furthermore, the more fashion-conscious children might not want to risk getting their own clothes dirty or torn, so they might not want to do activities such as art.

Many teachers feel that school uniform is good for discipline and makes the children feel part of the school. They maintain that on school trips, it is easier to check all the children are present if they are wearing school uniform. What's more, some adult jobs (e.g. flight attendants, nurses or policemen) involve wearing a uniform, so children might as well get used to it early. Finally, school uniform makes life easier for busy parents because they know exactly what their child is going to wear each day, and they know they're not going to get into any argument about whether a certain garment is suitable to wear to school!

Critics of school uniform argue that making children wear exactly the same clothes stifles their individuality and creativity. In some countries, like France and America, school uniform is almost unheard of. Most adults do not have to wear a uniform to work and would be horrified if their bosses suggested it, so why should children have to wear one to school? Furthermore, some schools insist that uniforms are bought from a certain shop, and this can be expensive. Poorer children would have to buy their uniforms second-hand which could embarrass them. Moreover, the style of school uniform does not suit everyone. I was a chubby child and looked atrocious in the white shirt, bottle-green jumper and black skirt my school insisted I wear. Maybe I would have been more self-confident in my own clothes?

There are yet more problems with school uniform. Everyone wearing the same clothes can lead to lots of lost property because there might be five blue fleeces left in the playground and nobody knows who they belong to. Children would recognise their own clothes much easily. What's more, children don't argue over clothes on non-uniform days, so why would they tease each other if they wore their own clothes all the time? Finally, the point about children wearing school uniform so they can be spotted easily on school trips isn't true because children often wear their own clothes on outings.

In conclusion, there are advantages and disadvantages about wearing uniform AND wearing ordinary clothes to school. On balance, although I hated wearing school uniform myself, I think there are probably more arguments in favour of school uniform. They do stop arguments in the playground, they do make life easier for busy parents, but most of all they let children get on with being children because they're not worried about messing their nice clothes up.