

Brainstorming for an Opinion Paragraph:

(Based on the table on page 149 in *Great Writing 2*)

Sometimes, when we are considering our opinion on the argument, we need to consider *both sides* of the argument.

It is often *much* harder to think of strong arguments for the “other side” of a proposal or policy, the side you disagree with. It’s also often very difficult to see what’s wrong with your own side’s arguments. It can be especially difficult if you don’t have access to someone you can discuss the issue with from another perspective—that is, if you feel like all of your friends probably agree with you about this policy or idea.

This is a tool that can help you do this in a more systematic way. You simply fill out a table that requires you to consider the arguments for and against a specific proposal, plan, policy, or system.

Topic Sentence: (In order to solve the problem of _____,) Children should begin their musical education with large ensembles in or around the 3rd grade.	
For:	Against:
1. Learning music is like learning languages: it’s easier if you start young. / <u>Stressful.</u>	1. Kids’ physical development isn’t sufficient for playing complex, large instruments. / <u>But kids can learn smaller ones to start. This can even be better for them.</u> / <u>The correct age varies by instrument and is highly variable.</u>
2. More than sports, collaborative art like playing music is great for building team spirit and cooperation skills.	2. The cost might be a problem for some families or schools.
3. Studies show that kids who learn music also do better in other subjects like mathematics. (and ????)	3. It takes a lot of time for kids to practice enough for music classes to be worthwhile.
4. Playing music can give kids a sense of confidence and achievement.	4. It assumes a one-size-fits-all approach to education.
5. Music is a form of competition that is less likely to involve injury.	5. Band education often is disconnected from the music kids actually care about.
6. Learning music helps kids to have a deeper broader appreciation of the arts beyond commercial culture.	6. Not all parents will understand or support this change to education.

If you fill out a table like this honestly, you will—at the very least—look at the other side of the argument, which is useful for when you want to write a rebuttal of the other side’s strongest argument—but you might also realize that there are serious problems with your own position, and that you need to rethink your solution or proposal.

Topic Sentence: (In order to solve the problem of _____,) Children should receive formal musical education in elementary school.	
For:	Against:
1. Learning music is like learning languages: it's easier if you start young. / <u>Stressful.</u>	1. Kids' physical development isn't sufficient for playing complex, large instruments. / <u>But kids can learn smaller ones to start. This can even be better for them.</u> / <u>The correct age varies by instrument and is highly variable.</u>
2. More than sports, collaborative art like playing music is great for building team spirit and cooperation skills.	2. The cost might be a problem for some families or schools.
3. Studies show that kids who learn music also do better in other subjects like mathematics. (and ????)	3. It takes a lot of time for kids to practice enough for music classes to be worthwhile.
4. Playing music can give kids a sense of confidence and achievement.	4. It assumes a one-size-fits-all approach to education.
5. Music is a form of competition that is less likely to involve injury.	5. Band education often is disconnected from the music kids actually care about.
6. Learning music helps kids to have a deeper broader appreciation of the arts beyond commercial culture.	6. Not all parents will understand or support this change to education.

Children should not receive formal musical education in elementary school for several reasons.