

WRITING A For and Against Essay

- A** Voula Coyle’s students got high marks on standardized tests. In the USA, some parents and students oppose standardized tests and have opted out of taking them. Read arguments for and against standardized tests and answer the questions below.

Standardized Tests – Good or Bad?

Standardized tests are an accepted part of school today. **Although** some people support them, others believe they do more harm than good.

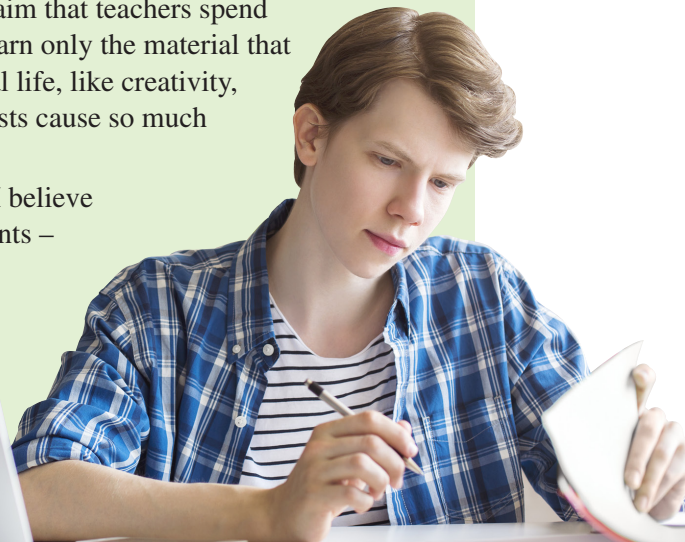
On the one hand, those who support standardized tests argue that they are fair and objective. This is because the tests are marked by people who do not know the student personally, **whereas** the student’s own teacher might be influenced by factors such as class participation, effort or behavior. Moreover, standardized tests increase motivation. When students know they will be tested on the material, they are more likely to learn it.

On the other hand, those who oppose standardized tests claim that teachers spend too much time “teaching to the test”. As a result, students learn only the material that is likely to be on the test, **but** not the skills they need for real life, like creativity, innovation and critical thinking. In addition, standardized tests cause so much stress that some students actually become sick.

While there are good arguments on both sides of the issue, I believe that standardized tests should be one way of assessing students – as long as they are not the only way.

Did You Know?

In 2002, a California newspaper reported that so many young students experienced test anxiety that one exam even included instructions on what to do if a student vomited on the test booklet.



- 1 What arguments does the writer present for standardized tests? Where are the arguments presented?
- 2 What arguments does the writer present against standardized tests? Where are the arguments presented?
- 3 What is the writer’s opinion? Where is the opinion expressed?

- B** Connectors of contrast are useful when presenting both sides of an argument. Look at the connectors in bold in the essay above. What contrasting ideas do they connect?

- C** **TASK:** Write a for and against essay. ——— Writing Guide, page 155

- Choose an issue discussed in this unit, or another issue of your choice.
- Plan your essay. Include:
 - an introduction
 - arguments for
 - arguments against
 - your opinion
- Write a first draft of your essay. Use connectors of contrast.
- Check your work and make corrections.
- Write a final draft of your essay.

Checklist, page 102