The Great Debate: Constructing a Balanced Discussion

Learning objective: To identify and organise the structural features of a formal discussion text, ensuring balanced arguments for and against a topic.

Max the monkey is trying to decide if the school library should be open 24 hours a day! He has written his points down, but they have become jumbled. Sort the statements below into the correct category: 'For' (reasons to open 24/7) or 'Against' (reasons to keep the current hours). Then, write a formal opening sentence for each side using the word bank.

Word bank: Furthermore · Conversely · Proponents · Critics · Nevertheless · Evidence

1. Sort these points into a table with two columns: 'For' and 'Against'. 1) Students could study at any time. 2) The school would have to pay more for electricity and heating. 3) It would help children who learn better at night. 4) Staff would need to be paid overtime, costing the school £500 extra per week. 5) It encourages independent learning. 6) It might disrupt children's sleep patterns. (6 marks)

2. Using the word bank, write an introductory sentence for the 'For' argument. (2 marks)

3. Using the word bank, write an introductory sentence for the 'Against' argument. (2 marks)

4. Why is it important to include a 'balanced view' in a discussion text rather than just your own opinion? (3 marks)

5. Suggest one piece of 'evidence' that could be added to the 'Against' argument to make it more persuasive. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a T-chart on a piece of paper to help Max organise his thoughts. On the left, draw a glowing lightbulb for the 'For' arguments; on the right, draw a clock showing late hours for the 'Against' arguments.

Extension challenge: Choose one of the points from your table and expand it into a full paragraph using a conjunction and a formal tone. Remember to avoid using 'I' or 'me', as formal discussions should remain objective.