

**STEP 1  
INTRODUCE**

When writing an argument, the writer presents an opinion about a debatable issue or topic. He aligns with one side, arguing that we SHOULD or should

NOT do something. Something is RIGHT or WRONG, pro or con, good or bad. Writers, today I am going to teach you how to align, or choose the strongest side on an issue when preparing to write an argument. This skill impacts the topic and therefore we are focusing on the trait of ideas within this lesson.

**STEP 2  
INSTRUCT**

**WHY this skill is important** | When writing an argumentative piece, there are different sides to the issue. However, a written argument is NOT a reflection of a writer’s personal beliefs or morals. It’s based on choosing the STRONGEST SIDE even if you don’t agree with it personally. Remember that the writing purpose is to persuade the reader that YOU are right whatever you are arguing for. We want to WIN the argument; woo the reader to nod his head and agree with us. (Show mode icon.) This is like a defense attorney they don’t agree with their client, but they still have to defend them. Writers do not have to personally agree with the side they are arguing.



**WHAT the skill is** | Since we are wanting to WIN, we need to identify the strongest side—the side with the best reasons and most powerful evidence. This requires doing a little research even before choosing a side. If we don’t do this, then we risk picking the WEAKER side that we will struggle to prove.

**STEP 2A | TELL THE CHILDREN | 5 MINUTES**

Instead of automatically picking a side, writers consider all the perspectives while executing 4 steps.

**HOW this skill works:**

- 1. NAME** the sides for the debatable topic. Label these at the top of the T-Chart. (Represent these differing perspectives with the red & blue hats. Explain that the “hat” sits on top of the head of people who think differently.)
- 2. LIST** facts, details, and info that support ONE side or position. Add key phrases from sources to one column (green details). Repeat for the opposing side in another column. (Add green “details” to the anchor chart.) Sometimes it’s hard to research with an open mind when you personally disagree. Remember, you are thinking *like* a person who agrees with that side—this isn’t YOUR personal opinion. (Demonstrate how you can take OFF the hat.)
- 3. STUDY** the lists. Reread all the details collected for EACH perspective. Count how MANY details are on each side. Consider if the side has lots of DIFFERENT details. Weigh the POWER of the details.
- 4. Choose** the strongest side based on Step 3. (Take the gold star and add to this column.) This is the side the writer SHOULD write in favor of because the research deems it to be the most winnable.

PROS	CONS

**STEP 2B | SHOW THE CHILDREN | 5 MINUTES**

*If I were arguing whether children under 16 should or should NOT be banned from social media, I can’t just start writing. I need to execute the 4 steps to align with the strongest side.* (Reference anchor chart.)

**Step 1:** I have to label the two sides— Yes ban (Red hat column) or No ban (Blue hat column). Pro (Red) or Con (Blue). Should ban (Red) or Should NOT ban (Blue).

(Reference the anchor chart to identify **Step 2**.) I did a little reading and research on the two sides. Reveal what you found for NOT banning social media (Put on blue hat.) Then, Think Aloud about how you personally think banning is wrong. (Pick up the Red hat.) Struggle with having to collect info for this side (Put on Red hat), but do it because that’s what writers do. Reveal the list of info collected.

**I do; You watch & listen.**

(Reference anchor chart.) **Step 3:** Now that I’ve collected info for the two sides, I have to study the list of facts.

- Well, let me count how many facts are listed for each side. (Write it down) The same number!
- Now I need to reread the individual details to see how much repeated information I collected and if any of the details are more powerful. Think Aloud while executing this process.

As you begin to focus in on one side being stronger than the other, announce it’s time for **Step 4**. Now I need to make a decision about which side is most winnable. And that’s to BAN social media until kids are 16 years old.

But I personally, Mrs. Harris, don’t agree with this. (Hat on/off to show that you, with no hat can believe what you want. But, as a writer, you should argue for the strongest side. Put hat on.)

**STEP 3  
INTERACT**

I want to do this again, but this time I want your help. Introduce the debatable topic: **Students should or should NOT be able to have cell phones in class.** First, take a vote on their PERSONAL opinion. Then, guide students through T&T opportunities using the 4 steps on the anchor chart.

- 1. Identify** the two sides for the T chart columns.
- 2. List** Reveal facts collected for one side. Reveal the facts for the other. (Relate this to the side they personally voted for.)
- 3. Study** the lists. Have students count up the number of details, number of bullets for each side. Reread and consider repeats and power of each.
- 4. Choose** which side is the strongest.

**We do** I do again; you help me.

**STEP 4  
CLOSE**

Writers, today we learned that in argumentative writing, a writer should not choose a side based on his personal feelings. Instead, he should determine the strongest side based on details and evidence. Today for Independent Writing Time, you will work with a partner to execute the same 4 steps for SIDE 1) Should genetic engineering be used? and SIDE 2) What is the best pet— cats or dogs? Now it’s your turn!

**(You do; I help.)**