Balanced argument

Definition
To get a good Level 5, you must be able to construct a balanced argument. A balanced argument means looking at an issue or topic from different points of view. It often starts with a question and the arguments are then sorted into those FOR and those AGAINST the issue. At the end, you will often have to reach a conclusion. A balanced argument is sometimes called a discussion!

Text plan
Issue: Should primary school children walk to school?

1. Start with a statement of the ISSUE under discussion and an overview of the main arguments.

2. State the arguments FOR and give evidence to back them up. This could be more than one paragraph.
   - To get to Level 5 you must present ideas in depth and give more than one argument FOR the issue.

3. State the arguments AGAINST and give evidence to back them up. This could be more than one paragraph.
   - To get to Level 5 you must present ideas in depth and give more than one argument AGAINST the issue.
   - Deal with each argument FOR in a point-for-point way and anticipate objections.

4. Finally, end with your conclusion, based on the weighing up of the evidence.

Written example
Should primary school children walk to school?

Fewer primary-age children walk to school now than ever before.

Many children leave primary school never having made their own way to or from school. Health research suggests that walking could have an important role to play in the health of the nation. However, this needs to be balanced against concerns about children’s safety.

There can be no doubt that regular walking aids physical wellbeing. Indeed, the latest Government research shows that those taking regular exercise are more alert, efficient and less prone to daydreaming.

Furthermore, schools involved in ‘Walk to School’ weeks have reported that children improve socially and get on better in school. Parents also think that children become more independent as they begin to deal with the world outside their home.

Environmentalists also campaign in this area. They claim that as much as 30% of traffic on the road between 8:30 and 9:00 is due to parents making short journeys to school. If children walked to school, traffic would be reduced. Roads would therefore be safer and the air cleaner.

On the other hand, many would say that walking without adult supervision often puts children at risk. The dangers are twofold – from traffic and from strangers. There are many cases of children being snatched from within shouting distance of their parents. In busy modern life, it is not often practical for adults to spend their time walking children to school before rushing off to work. In any case, children are taking exercise in clubs and after-school classes in a safe, supervised environment.

While acknowledging the environmentalists’ concerns, other research suggests that short car trips to school are insignificant in the battle against pollution. Other sources of pollution should be looked at before this one.

There is clearly an issue of child safety in the ‘Walk to School’ debate, however the arguments for it remain strong. Ways of ensuring walking is supervised (perhaps by adults on a rota) should be explored. The health of children will only be improved if they exercise at every opportunity.