

Should School Start Later?

Name: _____

Read the passage all the way through before you start.

Most Canadian schools begin between 8:30 and 9:00 in the morning. I think that is too early, and I think the evidence is on my side.

Sleep researchers have found that at puberty the body clock shifts later. A teenager who cannot fall asleep at nine is not being difficult; the chemical that brings on sleep is released later in them than in an adult. Ask that same student to be alert at 8:30 and you are asking for something their body is working against.

Where schools have moved their start time back, the results have been measured rather than guessed at. Attendance improves. Fewer students fall asleep in first period. In some districts the rate of car crashes among student drivers has dropped.

The strongest argument against the change is a practical one, and it is fair: buses, jobs, sports and younger siblings are all built around the current timetable. Moving school start times moves everything else too, and families with two working parents may find a later start harder, not easier.

That is a real cost. But it is a cost of organisation, and organisation can be changed. A sixteen-year-old's body clock cannot. When one side of a problem is fixed by biology and the other is fixed by a timetable, it seems clear to me which one should move.

Persuasive · 222 words

Before you turn over

1. Underline any word you are not sure of. Work out what you can from the sentence around it.

2. In one sentence, what is this passage about?

3. Write down one question you still have.

The questions are on the next page. →

Should School Start Later?

Answer in complete sentences. Look back at the passage as often as you need to.

1. What is the writer's opinion, stated in one sentence?

2. Give two pieces of evidence the writer uses.

3. The writer includes an argument against their own view. Does that make the piece weaker or stronger? Explain.

4. What is the difference the writer draws in the last paragraph?

5. Are you convinced? Give one reason, using the passage.

Should School Start Later? — Answer Key

1. That schools start too early and should begin later. (*Main idea*)
2. Any two: the body clock shifts later at puberty; attendance improves where start times moved; fewer students sleep in first period; student driver crash rates fell. (*Recall*)
3. Answers will vary, but a strong answer says stronger: facing the best objection honestly makes the writer more trustworthy and lets them answer it. (*Author's craft*)
4. That timetables are organisation and can be changed, while a teenager's body clock is biology and cannot. (*Recall*)
5. Answers will vary. Accept any position supported by a detail from the text. (*Evaluation*)