



Chapter 8: Opinions, positions and bias

Task 1

Texts 1 and 2 are two short essays written in response to the following question:

Discuss the evidence regarding the effects of vaccination in children.

- Which text represents a position and which an opinion?
- Does either text show evidence of bias?

Text 1

The issue of vaccination has attracted a great deal of discussion in recent years. Anti- vaccination campaigners claim that vaccination harms children's health and should be avoided. In this essay, I will examine some of the arguments presented by anti-vaccine advocates, focusing on claims that vaccination itself causes diseases, that it overloads a child's immune system and that it is unnecessary in the modern world.

Many people opposed to vaccination state that vaccination causes autism in children. It is true that *The Lancet*, a highly respected medical journal, published a study stating this in 1998. However, the author, Andrew Wakefield, was shown to have falsified the data, and the paper was withdrawn (*The Lancet*, Vol 375, No 9713). Many other papers have found no link between vaccination and autism (Madsen et al., 2002; Uchiyama et al., 2007; Mrozek-Budzuyn et al., 2010).

Some opponents argue that vaccination is unnecessary because the diseases we vaccinate against have largely disappeared. However, cases of whooping cough have greatly increased in recent years because not enough children are being immunised (Australia Government Department of Health, 2015).

Overall, the arguments raised by anti-vaccination campaigners are one-sided and ignore the huge amount of evidence that supports the beneficial results of vaccination.



Text 2

The question of whether or not children should be vaccinated against common illnesses has aroused a lot of argument. I think that vaccination harms children's health and should be avoided. Firstly, think about some of the ingredients that are used in vaccines. These include aluminium, which is associated with Alzheimer's disease, glycerine, which is toxic to the kidneys, and acetone, which is used in nail polish remover. These ingredients are injected deep into the child's body where the toxins are absorbed by the blood. This cannot possibly be healthy for the child.

Talk to your friends and neighbours and they will tell you that the unhealthiest kids are those who have been vaccinated. In fact, I know of many mothers who have some children who have been vaccinated and some who have not. They will tell you that their vaccinated children have far more health problems than their unvaccinated children.

This is supported by a very well-known study published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, which conclusively proved that measles vaccination causes autism.

Finally, many of the diseases that children are vaccinated against have almost disappeared. Nobody gets diphtheria these days, but we are still vaccinated against it. Whooping cough and measles are quite rare, and anyway are normal childhood diseases, so there is no real reason to insist on vaccination.

Overall, the danger from vaccination is far higher than the danger from the diseases that we vaccinate against.