

Building a balanced argument for and against

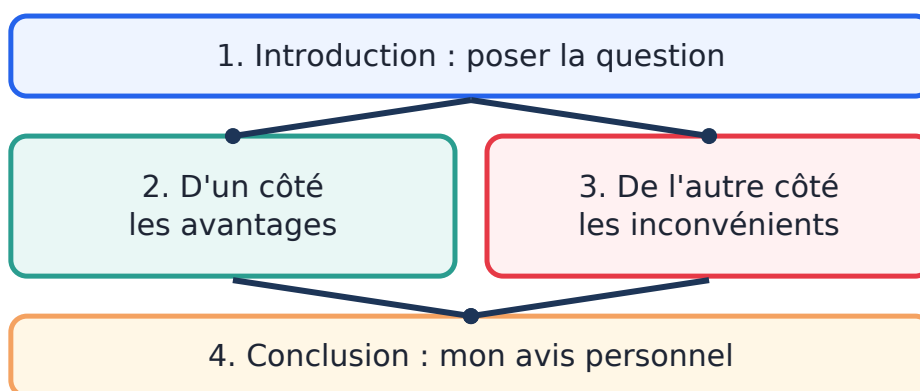
French B1 (intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: To weigh pros and cons in French, ask the question, present the advantages (d'un côté), then the drawbacks (de l'autre or en revanche), and finish with a personal conclusion (en conclusion). Use un avantage, un atout and un inconvénient to name the points, and connectors to keep both sides clearly separate.

Level: French B1 (CEFR intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B1, Writing

How do you structure a pros-and-cons text?

A good argument has four moves: ask the question, present one side, present the other side, then give your own view. Whether you speak at a meeting or write the DELF B1 opinion text (about 160 words), this order keeps readers with you.



The structure of a balanced text.

Examples

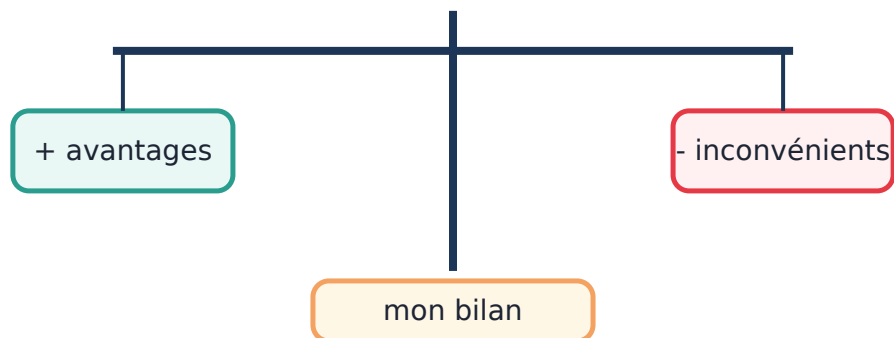
Faut-il choisir le télétravail ? — Should one choose remote work?

D'un côté, il permet de gagner du temps ; de l'autre, il peut isoler. — On the one hand it saves time; on the other it can isolate you.

Which words name advantages and drawbacks?

French	English
un avantage, un atout	an advantage, an asset

French	English
un inconvénient	a drawback
un point fort, un point faible	a strength, a weakness
un risque	a risk
avoir l'avantage de + infinitive	to have the advantage of



Weigh both pans, then give your balance.

Each point should be short and concrete. Prefer a fact (Le trajet dure quarante minutes.) to a vague adjective (Le trajet est horrible.). Two clear points per side are better than five weak ones, and a sentence such as Le principal avantage, c'est le prix tells the reader which point matters most.

Which connectors introduce the contrast?

Job	Connectors
two sides	d'un côté ... de l'autre (côté)
contrast	en revanche, cependant, pourtant, mais
two ideas at once	alors que, tandis que + indicative
concession	certes ... mais ...
adding	de plus, en outre, par ailleurs
concluding	en conclusion, tout bien considéré

Rule

En revanche opens the second idea and a comma follows: Le train est cher ; en revanche, il est confortable. Certes admits a point before mais refutes it: Certes, le vélo est fatigant, mais il est économique.

Watch out

English "inconvenient" suggests a small nuisance, but *un inconvénient* is any real drawback, big or small. Also, *l'avantage* and *l'inconvénient* are masculine, and the article elides: *l'inconvénient principal*, not *le inconvénient*. Finally, *par contre* is common in speech, whereas *en revanche* is safer in writing.

Culture

French schools teach a classic plan called *thèse*, *antithèse*, *synthèse*: one idea, its opposite, then a conclusion that reconciles them. The pros-and-cons text is a simple version of it.

Zoé's tip

Give each side the same number of points, usually two, and finish with *à mon avis* or *tout bien considéré*. A balanced text shows the reader you really weighed the question.

Key points to remember

- A balanced text has four parts: question, advantages, drawbacks, conclusion.
- *D'un côté ... de l'autre* is the fixed pair for "on the one hand ... on the other".
- *En revanche* opens a contrasting idea; *par contre* is its spoken equivalent.
- *Certes ... mais* admits a point before answering it.
- *Un inconvénient* and *un avantage* are masculine and elide: *l'inconvénient*.

Building a Balanced Argument for and Against: frequently asked questions

How do I say "on the one hand ... on the other hand" in French?

Use *d'un côté ... de l'autre* (or *de l'autre côté*). You can also use *d'une part ... d'autre part* in more formal writing.

What is the difference between *en revanche* and *par contre*?

They mean the same, "on the other hand". *En revanche* is accepted in all registers; *par contre* is common in speech and informal writing.

How do I conclude a pros-and-cons text?

Use *en conclusion*, *tout bien considéré* or *pour finir*, then state your own opinion with *je pense que* or *à mon avis*.

Is *inconvénient* the same as "inconvenient"?

Not exactly. Un inconvénient is a drawback of any size, a real disadvantage of a choice, not just a small nuisance.

Which mood follows alors que and tandis que?

In the contrast sense they take the indicative: Elle vit à Dakar tandis que ses parents vivent à Thiès.