

**Optimist / Pessimist**

This technique is best for established groups and should have agreed-upon norms for communication, respect, and trust. Because controversial topics can be polarizing and are often tied to personal values and emotions, care must be taken using this strategy. Perhaps choosing topics that are less intense, consequential, personal, or that pertains to a different topic than is being taught is a good practice for introducing this strategy.

In pairs, learners take opposite emotional sides of a case study, statement, or topic. Encourage them to be empathic and truly “live” the case study. After reading about the issue, learners can have a dialogue with someone from a different point of view.

[ProCon.Org](https://www.procon.org/) is an excellent resource for timely topics such as the example below.

[Read more about ProCon.Org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ProCon.org)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Is homework beneficial?](https://www.procon.org/headline.php?headlineID=005411) | |
| Proponents of homework say that it improves student achievement and allows for independent learning of classroom and life skills. They also say that homework gives parents the opportunity to monitor their child's learning and see how they are progressing academically. | |
| Opponents of homework say that too much may be harmful for students as it can increase stress, reduce leisure and sleep time, and lead to cheating. They also say that it widens social inequality and is not proven to be beneficial for younger children. | |
|  | |
| Pro 1: Homework improves student achievement | Con 1: Too much homework can be harmful |
| Pro 2: Homework helps to reinforce learning and develop good study habits and life skills | Con 2: Homework disadvantages low-income students |
| Pro 3: Homework allows parents to be involved with their child’s learning | Con 3: There is a lack of evidence that homework helps younger children. |