

TEACHER GUIDE

DEBATE OBJECTIVES:

- To practice debating and discussing topics and expressing opinions
- Think about different points of view
- Use facts to support opinions
- To structure and argument using points and explanations
- Understand debates have a for/against structure

KEY VOCABULARY:

Fact – a thing that is known or proven to be true.

Opinion – a belief or attitude about something that isn't necessarily based on facts.

Point – a short sentence that explains why you support or oppose an opinion.

Explanation – how and why your point is true.

Pro – An argument or consideration in favor of something.

Con – An argument or opinion against something.

Rebuttal – a statement that a claim or criticism is not true.

BENEFITS OF DEBATE INCLUDE THAT STUDENTS WILL:

- Build confidence** – Debates foster a belief in one's abilities and encourage students to speak clearly and eloquently while maintaining eye contact.
- Become critical thinkers** – Debates require students to carefully plan and craft a reasoned and well-thought-out argument.
- Develop research skills** – Debates require students to research their point of view, assess multiple sources, and then organize and present them in a meaningful way.
- Evaluate both sides of an issue** – Debates encourage students to explain their ideas and find weak points in an opponent's point of view.
- Collaborate with peers** – Students get to work together and be a part of a team.
- Accept and understand the beliefs of others** – Debates help students to connect and relate to others who may have a different point of view.

TEACHER GUIDE

FOR BEGINNERS, MODEL A DEBATE:

In order to get your students into the Great Debate mindset, begin by modeling a debate by putting a controversial topic on the board like "Homework should be banned!"

Next to the debate topic write down these terms: fact, opinion, point, explanation, pros, cons, and rebuttal. Discuss each term and its meaning.

Questions to ask in order to check for understanding:

- What's the difference between fact and opinion?
- Which one carries more weight, and why?
- Where is a good place to gather information on your topic?
- How do you know if it's a credible resource?

The key to running a successful debate is to make sure students follow these steps:

1. Understand the topic and the two sides (for and against) – reinforce that being able to understand both sides of an argument strengthens your ability to argue your position
2. Make your point – I think...
3. Provide an explanation I think...because...
4. Use facts to strengthen your point of view..."I think homework is beneficial because studies show students who practice the material they're learning, on average perform better on tests."
5. Think about what the other side may say and form a rebuttal

TEACHER GUIDE

NOW YOU'RE READY TO START THE GREAT DEBATE:

Choose your debate style (options next page or create your own) and hand out character cards. Each debate character card includes a character and their position for/against the topic being debated. After the character's background, there is a point that helps the student to understand their position. This will help them when they find facts to support their point of view. Beneath that is a probing question which they will use to engage with the other characters who have the opposite points of view.

Students Actively Debating:

If students are actively debating, they will complete their student debate worksheet. First, they will fill out their character information. Additionally, they will need to research and find three facts to support their position. They should also think about the other side of the debate. What might someone on the opposing side say? They should plan to come up with potential responses to the rebuttal.

When prep and research are completed by teams, the teacher decides which group presents first.

Students As Audience:

If your debate option includes having some students as an audience, be sure to have articles or websites ready for them to read so they can learn more about the controversy of the topic. Audience members will complete info worksheet and come up with questions to ask both debate teams.

After Debate:

After the debate is completed, have students use the Venn diagram to fill out the information presented during the debate. What points were made by each side? Was there anything they agreed on? Finally, have them take their own stance based on what they just heard using supporting facts from the debate.

Assessment:

- A grading rubric has been provided for the teacher to grade each team.
- A peer assessment has also been provided for students to assess the speakers' behavior of each team.

TEACHER GUIDE

DEBATE OPTIONS:

THREE QUESTION DEBATE (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Divide the class into two teams. Small groups focus on their character cards.

Alternate which team delivers main points first.

15 minutes: Prep/Research

3 minutes: Team A Main Points from character cards

3 minutes: Team B Main Points from character cards

2 minutes: Team A Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)

2 minutes: Team B Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)

Debrief

SMALL GROUP DEBATE (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Generate two debate teams of 2-4 students (cards assigned).

Often done multiple times per semester until each student has had a chance to debate a topic

5-10 minutes: Prep/Research

5 minutes: Opening Statement (Team A)

5 minutes: Opening Statement (Team B)

5 minutes: Rebuttal (Team A)

5 minutes: Rebuttal (Team B)

15 minutes: Audience ("media reporters") questions both teams

Debrief

TOWN HALL (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Assign some students roles to represent.

Introduce topic.

5-10 minutes: Prep/Research

2 minute persuasive speeches (pro)

2 minute persuasive speeches (con)

2 minute: Q and A each side

10 minutes: Audience ("citizens") question both teams

"Citizens" vote