

# Debate Guidelines

The goal of a debate is to help students learn how to listen to, value, and address an opposing viewpoint. In addition, students will learn how they can find common ground and reach consensus on challenging and divisive issues.



## Debate guidelines

- Each team will have at least 3 speakers.
- Each team member should speak for 2 minutes each.
- Other non-speaking team members should provide supporting notes and materials to speakers throughout the debate.
- The teacher decides which team has won the debate.

## Conducting the debate

**Step 1.** Once you have established your debate teams, allowed teams time to develop their arguments, and rearranged your room you can explain the rules of the debate to the students:

- Listen to the other side with an aim at understanding their point of view.
- Take good notes. Use credible sources for evidence.
- No shouting, no degrading remarks and no insults. Remind students of the class guidelines you set at the start of this lesson.

**Step 2.** The first team will be arguing for the AFFIRMATIVE. They should:

- Define the topic.
- Present the affirmative's team line.
- Outline briefly what each speaker in their team will talk about.
- Present the first half of the affirmative case.

As they present, the opposing team should take notes in support of their arguments and rebuttals.

Once complete, invite panellists and opponents to ask questions for clarification or about evidence that is provided.

**Step 3.** The second team will be arguing for the NEGATIVE. They should:

- Present the negative team line.
- Outline briefly what each of the negative speakers will say.
- Rebut a few of the main points of the first affirmative speaker.
- Present the first half of the negative team's case.

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As they present the opposing team should take notes in support of their arguments and rebuttals.

Once complete, invite panellists and opponents to ask questions for clarification or about evidence that is provided.

**Step 4.** Subsequent team members should reaffirm the team's line and rebut a few of the main points of the other team.

**Step 5.** After both sides have rebutted the opposing argument, invite the panellists and team members to share whether any of the arguments presented in the debate made them want to change sides, and allow them to share why they did or didn't want to do this.

In addition, invite both teams to think about if any areas of common ground emerged during the debate. What were they?

Consider using any common ground to guide further inquiry. You could work with students to develop questions around these points of common ground and use these to explore other issues in the news.