

# Debate guidelines for teachers

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*A debate is an art of persuasion and a form of public discussion, which has several benefits. A good debate encompasses rational and strong arguments, which leads to sound decision-making. Debaters acquire self-confidence, improve their higher-order and critical thinking skills, as well as enhance their analytical and research capabilities. /.../ Debating is about critically assessing problems and reading deeply into an issue. — Murniati Abu Karim (The art of debating, Oxford style)*

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## **Different types of debate**

- Oxford style
- Full class style
- Town hall style
- Chain debate style
- Spar style

## **Team Arrangement**

- Set teams before the debating day
- Randomly selected teams before the debate
- Randomly selected teams on the day of the debate
- Students placed on the side where they either agree or disagree with the motion

## **Preparation**

- Provide a reading base for students to allow them to research and think about both sides.
- Ask students to come up with questions to the other side, once the main debate has been conducted. (This can be done well in advance.)

## **Timekeeping**

- How long is each section going to last?
- Are students likely to become ever more excited, and how will you handle this excitement

### **TIP!**

- Encourage students to focus on the evidence and not to attack others verbally.
- Have a guideline prepared so that students also know the limits of the debate. For example:

- 1) *Listen to the chairperson, who will lead the debate.*
- 2) *Do not interrupt others.*
- 3) *Keep your answers short and sharp.*
- 4) *Be engaged and ask questions about your opponent's points.*
- 5) *Do not touch anyone.*
- 6) *Try to be dispassionate.*
- 7) *Do not speak over others.*

The summary was made for educational purposes to help the participants of the first exchange of groups of pupils of the strategic partnership "May ICT be with you" prepare for a value-based debate. The web sources used were

- <https://www.esidebates.com/a-teachers-guide-the-basics-of-a-classroom-debate/>
- <https://www.nst.com.my/education/2018/10/417311/art-debating-oxford-style>

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8) *Let your teammates share their ideas as well.*

## Choosing a Debate Topic

### Propositions or debate questions

- In an argument or debate, a proposition is a statement that affirms or denies something.
- In formal debates, a proposition may also be called a topic, motion, or resolution.
- From the Latin, "*to set forth*"

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*Debate is the process of presenting arguments for or against a proposition. Propositions for which people argue are controversial and have one or more individuals presenting the case for the proposition while others present the case against it. Every debater is an advocate; the purpose of each speaker is to gain the belief of the audience for his side. Argument is the core of the debate speech—the superior debater must be superior in the use of argument. The chief means of persuasion in debate is the logical mode. — Robert B. Huber and Alfred Snider, *Influencing Through Argument*, rev. ed. International Debate Education Association, 2006*

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### Debates based on facts

These are questions which are generally true in nature, but it is not clear to what extent. For example:

*Computers can replicate human intelligence.*

*The United States is engaged in cyber warfare.*

*Global warming is a problem.*

### Debates based on values

These are based on moral, religious, and ethical issues. They are dealing with the worth that an idea brings. For example:

*Equality is more important than liberty.*

*Democracy is overvalued.*

*Immigration is a burden to the education system.*

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## **Debates based on policy**

These are debates which are focussed on “problems and solutions” or “how to”.  
For example:

*Human trafficking can be reduced and stopped.*

*How can we protect the internet as a place for freedom of speech?*

*What policies should social media companies have to protect user data?*

## Language

- With any ESL/TEFL classroom, there is a need to teach vocab and any language related to the topic. The best way to do so is using:
  - videos from YouTube or TED Talks to have students learn more about the subject;
  - images to tell the story;
  - authentic newspapers.

## Common Debate Styles

### **Full Class Debate**

1. Divide the class into **two** debate teams.
  - 10 minutes: Preparation
  - 4 minutes: Opening Statement (Side A)
  - 4 minutes: Opening Statement (Side B)
  - 2 minutes: Rebuttal (Side A)
  - 2 minutes: Rebuttal (Side B)
  - 1 minutes: Closing Statement (Side A)
  - 1 minutes: Closing Statement (Side B)Teacher/Chairperson conducts a plenary (2 minutes)

### **“Sparring” Debates/Chain Debate II**

1. Use as a practice debate as it ensures full participation.
2. Present multiple items to debate from one or more topics.
3. Students debate one-to-one for each question
  - 2 minutes: Preparation
  - 2 minutes each: Opening Statements
  - 1 minute each: Cross Examination
  - 1 minute each: Closing Statements

Teacher/Chairperson conducts a plenary, 2 minutes.

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## **Three Question Debate**

1. Pose three questions related to a single topic.
2. Divide the class into two debate teams.
3. Alternate which team delivers main points first.
  - 10 minutes: Preparation
  - 5 minutes: Team 1 Main Points (Q1, Q2, Q3)
  - 5 minutes: Team 2 Main Points (Q1, Q2, Q3)
  - 3 minutes: Team 1 Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)
  - 3 minutes: Team 2 Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)

Teacher/Chairperson conducts a plenary, 2 minutes

## **Small Group Debate**

1. Generate two debate teams of 2-5 students.
2. Often done multiple times per semester until each student has debated.
  - 5 minutes: Preparation
  - 5 minutes: Opening Statement (Side A)
  - 5 minutes: Opening Statement (Side B)
  - 5 minutes: Rebuttal (Side A)
  - 5 minutes: Rebuttal (Side B)
  - 15 minutes: Audience questions both teams

Teacher/Chairperson conducts a plenary, 2 minutes.

## **Chain Debate**

1. Divide the class into two debate teams.
2. Present a topic and alternate between teams.
3. Each person must:
  - present a new supporting or opposing argument;
  - attack an argument that has been presented;
  - defend an argument that has been attacked;
  - extend an argument that has been presented

## **Town Hall**

1. Assign students' roles to represent.
2. Introduce the topic.
  - 2-minute persuasive speeches
  - Council/presider deliberates
  - "Citizens" vote

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