

DISAGREE

AGREE

FOR

YES

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GET

DEBATING

AGREE

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FOR

YES

DISAGREE



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GLOSSARY

Some terms you may come across in different styles of debate.

Abstain: To choose not to vote for one side or the other.

Argument: A statement or reason for or against a point.

Debate: A formal argument with agreed rules about a particular subject, usually with a method for deciding which 'side' has won.

Loaded question: A question designed to trip-up an opponent by giving a limited range of possible responses. Example: 'Is this the first time you've made up the facts?' 'Yes' means you have made up the facts; 'No' suggests that you made them up in the past.

Moderator: The person who runs the debate ensuring fair-play and that the rules are kept. In the Houses of Parliament, the moderator is known as the Speaker.

Motion: The question that the debate is addressing. This is sometimes called a 'Resolution'.

Opposer: Someone who speaks against the proposal.

Proposer: The person putting forward the subject of the debate.

Rebuttal: Answering an opponent's arguments, demonstrating why you think they are incorrect.

Secunder: Somebody who backs up the proposer or the opposer.

Strategy: Planning to give yourself the best chance of winning the debate. For example, having facts ready to rebut any challenge; considering in advance the arguments your opponent(s) might put forward.

Summary: Giving the main points of your argument at the end of the debate in a concise and clear fashion. This is the last opportunity to get your message across.

Vote: The system by which those involved in the debate (whether or not they have spoken) choose which side they support. This can be achieved by various methods including a show of hands, physical movement (such as splitting into groups), electronic voting or voting on paper.



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DEBATER'S CHECKLIST

A step by step checklist to get you ready for debate.

MOTION:

Are you arguing

For or **Against**?

Do you have everything you need?

Do you have something to make notes with?

Are you using any documents or props?



IS YOUR INTRODUCTION READY?

It should be short, clear, memorable and to the point. Use these phrases as prompts to get you started:

'I would like to thank the Moderator/Speaker/Chairperson for this opportunity to discuss this important subject.'

'My reasons for supporting this motion are...'

Give two main reasons for your view:

1.

2.

Give your supporting arguments:

List your facts and evidence:

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**MAKE NOTES FOR
YOUR SUMMARY:**

Concentrate on the main points, your strongest arguments. Use the phrases below as prompts to get you started.

**In conclusion let me stress that...
(short, hard-hitting comment that supports your argument)**

I have presented clear evidence that...

**I have listened to my opponents with interest and while I agree that...
I take the view that...**

**Finally, I urge you to support me because...
(strongest, clearest argument presented with clarity and passion)**

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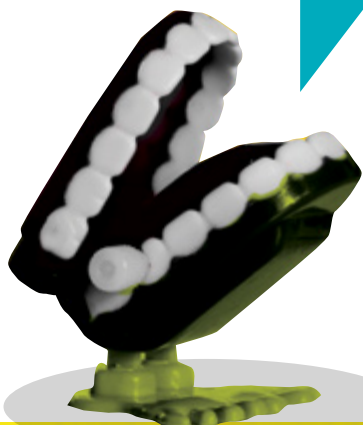
HINTS & TIPS

Before the debate

- Research and make notes covering facts and figures, and your main arguments
- Think of some memorable phrases or slogans to reinforce your argument
- Organise your notes and any documents you will refer to. Use post-it notes to mark pages and highlighter pens for key passages
- Rehearse so that you feel confident in what you are going to say and how you are going to say it
- Take a deep breath before you start

It's not just what you say... It's the way you say it too!

- Sometimes trying to outwit and trip up your opponents can work against you. Coming across as reasonable and fair minded could help others see your point of view
- Think about your physical stance; command the room when you are speaking by standing straight and making eye contact with your opponents and supporters



Argument styles

- Argue with clarity, making your points concise and easy to understand
- Vary your style, sometimes use wit and humour, at other times use polite but insistent questioning
- Let your passion show when it is most effective, especially at the end of the debate
- Show respect for your opponents; be polite and considerate, keeping the focus on the argument

And finally...

- Look out for trick or loaded questions that could trip you up
- Listen carefully to what is said in the debate, making notes for your rebuttal
- Be prepared to change your mind on some points, don't just argue for the sake of it. Keep your main arguments in mind even if you agree with some opposing points

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MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Use this guide to manage the tricky task of running a debate.

If you're the moderator of a debate, you're acting in a similar role to the Speaker of the House of Commons or the Lord Speaker in the House of Lords. It is your job to run the debate in a fair and efficient way. You must keep to time and steer towards a vote at the end of a debate.

The following tips can help you keep the debate on track.

Be crystal clear about the motion for debate

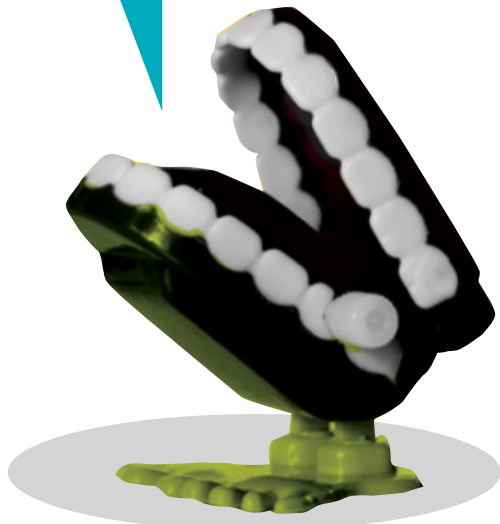
- Study the motion beforehand; ensure that it is not too vague and that it focuses on a specific point that can be decided by a vote

Good example: We propose a voting age of 16 in general elections.

Bad example: We propose lowering the voting age in elections.

- If anything is unclear in the motion, go back to the proposer and ask them to clarify and rewrite
- Read the motion twice in a clear voice at the start of the debate

Make sure that you know the names of those proposing and opposing the motion before you begin so you know who to call to speak during the debate.



Understand and set out the rules of the debate

This is your opportunity to stamp your authority on the debate. Keep to as few rules as possible and explain the procedure.

- There is a limited time available for the debate
- People should indicate that they wish to speak by... (choose a method, such as standing to attract your attention)
- Each person may speak for no more than... (e.g. two minutes)
- People should be polite and use appropriate language (it is important that you demonstrate these qualities yourself)
- Stress that your decision is final

The debate should follow a set order, such as:

1. **Proposer opens debate**
2. **Opposer speaks**
3. **Debate open to the floor**
4. **Summing up from both sides**
5. **Vote**
6. **Announcement of result**

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MODERATOR'S GUIDE

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Be clear on the timetable and keep an eye on the time

- Prepare a written timetable for yourself and tick off items as the debate progresses
- Use a stopwatch to keep speeches to time
- If possible, delegate the role of time keeper. They can tell you when each speaker has had their allotted time

Be strictly impartial

- Remember that your authority comes from your position as moderator, not from you personally
- Your role is to ensure fairness to all so it is important that you keep your own views out of the debate

Ensure a fair spread of views and speakers

Make sure that you do not show favouritism in your choice of speakers. Are you calling an equal number of female and male speakers? Are each side getting a fair share of the time available?

Keep order during the debate

As moderator you will need some measures in place for anyone who challenges your authority, uses inappropriate language or breaks the rules in any way. Measures can include:

- Asking that something be re-phrased
- Asking someone to stop speaking before their allotted time
- Asking someone to apologise

Your aim is to run the debate without using these measures but to have them in reserve for occasional use when needed.

Keep on topic

Debates can easily veer off topic, becoming focused on minor details or the way things are said rather than the motion being considered. Use your position as moderator to bring things back to the motion, re-reading it if necessary.

Command the space

- Ensure that you have a good view of everyone
- Scan the room as you speak to include each participant



Remember:

Be prepared
Be firm
Be fair
Be clear

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IN THE
NEWS NOW

Identify current news stories and topics suitable for debate.

We're bombarded with news stories from the serious to the trivial. The news comes to us through:

- **Local and national newspapers**
- **Radio and TV**
- **The internet**
- **Social media**
- **Teachers, family and friends**

Here are some tips to help you find the most appropriate subjects for debate.

Does this story offer a focussed debate subject and single agree/disagree motion?

To run a successful debate that ends in a vote you will need something to vote on.

Look for stories that are creating a lot of interest. What are people talking about? What's trending on social media and what is dividing opinion?

You're looking for an issue that can be put into a clear 'agree or disagree' question or statement.

Consider these topics and decide if they would make good debate subjects.

1. **Britain should not have nuclear weapons**
2. **There is a new Star Wars film being planned**
3. **Students should be able to leave school at 14**
4. **School sports days waste valuable learning time**
5. **How much time do you spend on the internet?**

Do you know or can you get the facts?

It's important to do research on the motion you are considering. For example, if you were thinking about debating the motion 'A colony should be established on Mars in the next six months', your research would tell you that it takes longer than six months just to travel from the Earth to Mars. Therefore, this motion would be easily defeated in a debate.

Choose a subject that is:

- **Realistic**
- **Researchable**
- **Understandable**

Is it interesting enough?

Look for debate topics that are going to be of interest to most people involved. An ideal subject would be one that:

- Affects the group now or will do in the future
- Is likely to divide opinion
- Arouses some passion

Where can you find debate topics?

You can ask people what they find interesting at the moment. What news stories have they seen, heard or read that stick in their minds?

You can visit these websites used by many schools and groups to provide debate starting points:

www.bbc.co.uk/freespeech

www.truetube.co.uk/politics-government

www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

www.teachitcitizenship.co.uk/ideas

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**IN YOUR
SCHOOL**

Find issues for debate at your school and turn talk into positive action.

There are many ways to be involved in democratic decisions and to influence debates. Here are some suggestions for how to extend democracy and debating in school.

Choose your issues

- Focus on issues in your school which are practical, achievable and of interest to a large number of people
- Ask yourself if the issue can be stated as a clear motion for debate
- Focus on the changes that the debate might lead to and use this vision to get people involved

Survey the electorate

If you have more than one issue that is suitable for debate you can survey the school community to help you decide which one to prioritise. Try one of the following methods:

One to one canvassing

This involves talking directly to other students, asking them their views on a particular issue and noting what they say. Conduct as many of these face-to-face interviews as you can to ensure you receive a range of views.

- Have your questions prepared in advance
- Keep questions simple and clear
- Keep it short
- Make sure that you ask everyone the same questions with the same wording
- Record the results using tick boxes and/or comments



Printed (or online) surveys

Put together a series of questions on your chosen issues. Hand printed copies out or, if online, tell students where they can find it.

- Ensure that the questions are straightforward and precise
- Consider the best format for each question: YES/NO tick-box, answer on a scale of 1-10 or a space to comment
- Work out in advance how you will collect, assess and report back the responses
- Set a deadline for survey submissions

Online polls

Polls can be used quickly to get a snapshot of opinion or at the end of a debate as a form of voting.

- Ask simple YES/NO questions
- Think about the best platform for your poll (social media, polling websites, your school's website)
- Select the most appropriate method of showing the results (numerically, bar/pie chart)

Extend the debate

Good communication is essential so that anyone can get involved. You can:

- Post clear summaries of what was discussed on notice boards and school websites
- Use assemblies to bring everyone up to date with issues and progress
- Use posters, videos and audio to get key messages across
- Ask teachers if you can use lessons and any forums for discussion to explore relevant topics