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GET

DEBATING

TEACHERS'  
NOTES



# GET DEBATING



## TEACHERS' NOTES

The activity sheets are intended to be used by students to support debating and are self-explanatory. These Teachers' Notes offer suggestions for use in the classroom.

These resources encourage careful consideration of issues affecting communities and society as a whole. Students will learn how to analyse arguments, separate fact from opinion and present their views in the most effective way.

### Glossary

This introduces students to some terms they may come across in different styles of debate.

Use it as a discussion starter, asking students about their understanding of the terms before they see the sheet. They can also write their own definitions of the terms and then compare these with the definitions provided.

Students can develop their own examples of loaded questions and also practice writing concise summaries of arguments.

Discuss the challenges facing the moderator and any rules that the students consider appropriate for debating in school.

Discuss the most appropriate method of voting for the debates that you will hold in school.

### Debater's Checklist

This is designed to be used before and during a debate to support preparation and research, developing and clarifying arguments and structuring speeches.

Students can take the checklist into the debate or can transfer their notes onto cards for quick and easy reference.

They can work in pairs to develop their speeches and perform them in a practice session before the debate. They can also use this opportunity to challenge each other's arguments. This also provides an opportunity to focus on posture and voice projection as explored in the 'It's not just what you say...' section.

### Moderator's Guide

A good way for students to understand the nature of debate is for them to take on the role of moderator. This can be challenging as they adopt an authority figure alongside their peers. The Moderator's Guide is designed to support students who take on this role.

Students can work in small groups to gain practice at moderation. In a group of three there can be two debaters and one moderator. In a group of four a timekeeper can be added. For larger groups, you could assign proposer, opposer and seconder roles.

If you choose to moderate the debate yourself, you could have one or more student deputies who take over with your support once the debate is underway.

Students can work in pairs or small groups to decide the rules and procedure for a debate and then take turns to moderate.

### In the News Now

This activity sheet includes some sample issues and asks the students to consider which ones make good subjects for debate. Suggested responses are:

**Topic 1** – Britain should not have nuclear weapons.

This would make a good debating subject because it is a single issue that people have differing views about.

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**Topic 2** – There is a new Star Wars film being planned.

This would not make a suitable subject because it relates to a matter of fact. There is nothing to debate, either a new film is planned or it is not. You could ask students to reframe this into an appropriate debate motion such as: the world does not need another Star Wars film.

**Topic 3** – Students should be able to leave school at 14.

This meets the requirement of being a specific subject which can be debated and voted upon.

**Topic 4** – School sports days waste valuable learning time.

This offers an opportunity for an open discussion about learning and school communities which can be focused into an agree/disagree decision, therefore making it a suitable subject for debate.

**Topic 5** – How much time do you spend on the internet?

This is a question and it relates to facts, but everyone has their own answer and so it is not a suitable debate subject. It could be used in research for a motion such as 'People in this class/group/school spend too much time on the internet'.

Using the notes on the activity sheet, ask students to research a good debate motion, one that is:

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

Use the links on the activity sheet or bring in a selection of today's newspapers which students can look at for possible stories.

### In your School

This is all about using debate to make a practical difference in your school community.

Once the students have read the activity sheet, they can work in small groups to come up with a list of three topics that could be debated in school. Collate the results and then vote to prioritise the top three ideas from the whole class. Ask the proposer of each idea to speak about it before moving to a final vote (perhaps with a secret ballot) to choose the number one issue for debate.

With reference to the activity sheet, ask students to consider the practicality of the chosen issue. What would need to happen to allow their idea to become reality? What forum would be able to progress the idea (school council, proposal to governors...)? Can it be afforded and would it have sufficient backing from the school community and staff? This can be solo work, in groups or as a whole class discussion.

Finally, set up a formal debate with proposer(s), opposer(s) and a moderator. Devise a motion in a form such as: 'We believe that the school should support the following improvement/change/development...' Use this debate to thoroughly explore the pros and cons of the motion before taking the idea further.