

Appendix 5

Suggestions for Conducting a Debate

Although debates can take many forms, the following procedures have proven particularly effective in many classrooms. You have a choice of two options: the formal debate and the informal debate.

Option 1: Formal Debate

JUDGES

At least three members of the class should serve as judges (or, preferably, you will invite three people from outside the class). One of the judges should be assigned as the *timekeeper* and should monitor the length of each of the presentations. A second judge should act as the *presiding judge* and should supervise the proceedings. This person will be responsible for keeping the debate orderly and for calling on the presenters in turn.

TEAMS

After the judges have been selected, the remainder of the class should form two equal teams—one supporting the debate statement and the other opposing it. Each team should elect a *coordinator* who will organize the team members. Team members should also elect a *recorder* who will take notes on the group's activities and decisions.

PREPARING FOR THE DEBATE

Team members will meet to develop the arguments for their position. Each team will first make a list of the major arguments (or abbreviated statements) supporting its position. The coordinator will review the list to make sure that all the important arguments have been included and that no argument is duplicated. There should be as many arguments as there are team members. If there are too many arguments, the least important should be eliminated. If there are too few, additional ones should be developed. Option: In addition to the lists, you could require students to prepare a group position paper to help them strengthen and organize their arguments.

Each team will make a copy of its list to exchange with the other team. Each team member will select a statement from the list to develop into a 3-minute argument. He or she will also select an argument from the list submitted by the other team and will prepare a 3-minute rebuttal. Each person will thus be responsible for two arguments: one that supports the team's position and another that answers or refutes the other team's arguments.



THE DEBATE

The debaters should make their presentations in the following order:

- Team 1 presents argument (3 minutes)
- Team 2 presents rebuttal (3 minutes)
- Team 2 presents argument (3 minutes)
- Team 1 presents rebuttal (3 minutes)

The sequence is repeated until all debaters have presented their arguments and rebuttals. A 5-minute summation is then given by a member (usually the coordinator) of each team. This summation reiterates the most important points made by the team members.

JUDGING METHOD A

A convenient method for judging the debate is to evaluate each set of arguments in turn. After an argument and counterargument are presented, the judges will determine which one of the debaters delivered the most effective and convincing argument. Each judge will set up a score sheet similar to that shown on the next page and will assign points as follows:

- 4 points = Excellent
- 3 points = Good
- 2 points = Fair
- 1 point = Poor

SCORE SHEET

	Team 1 (For debate statement)	Team 2 (Against debate statement)
Argument 1		
Argument 2		
Argument 3		
Argument 4		
Etc.		
Total Points		

JUDGING METHOD B

A more complex method of judging provides the judges with scoring criteria as follows:

Style of Presentation

- ? Does the person speak clearly and smoothly? Is the speaker poised?
- ? Does the speaker seem to believe in what he or she is saying?
- ? Does the speaker fidget or make distracting movements?

Organization of Arguments

- ? Does the speaker organize ideas well, or does he or she jump randomly from one idea to another?
- ? Are points clear and easy to understand?
- ? Is the argument well thought out?

Use of Information

- ? Does the speaker seem to know what he or she is talking about?
- ? Are facts and other pertinent information included?
- ? Do the facts help to support the argument?

Strength of Argument

- ? How convincing are the arguments?
- ? Do the arguments persuade you to support the speaker's position?
- ? How important are the arguments?
- ? Does the speaker argue about unnecessary details?

For this method, judges will record a score for each of the above criteria. (See the Student Page "Debate Score Sheet" for a sample table you can use.) Each speaker will thus receive four scores. Judges should add the four scores and record the amount in the subtotal column. The highest possible score is 20 (5 x 4).

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Very Good
- 3 = Good
- 2 = Fair
- 1 = Poor

The subtotal column will then be added to obtain the team's score.

Option 2: Informal Debate

You might consider using this option if time for the activity is very limited. Divide the class into two teams, one in support of and one against the debate statement. The teams should be seated facing one another. Select someone to be a timekeeper.

Arguments are presented by a team member from one side, followed by a team member from the other side. Arguments are presented alternately until all students have had an opportunity to speak. Each speaker is allowed 1 minute.

This debate should be spontaneous. Teams should not spend extensive time preparing but should, using the information provided by the

teacher, develop the arguments as the debate progresses. Students will need to listen carefully to the arguments and should try to introduce their own new ideas. The objective is to think and organize ideas quickly. It is almost like brainstorming; someone presents an idea and that idea leads to another idea. Each debater can build his or her idea from the previous idea or present a totally different one.

After all arguments have been presented, the class should discuss some of the main points that were brought out by each side and should decide what the best arguments were.



Debate Score Sheet

For Debate Statement	Presentation Style	Organization of Arguments	Use of Information	Strength of Argument	Subtotal
Speaker 1					
Speaker 2					
Speaker 3					
Speaker 4					
Speaker 5					
Speaker 6					
Speaker 7					
Speaker 8					
Speaker 9					
Speaker 10					
				Total:	

Against Debate Statement	Presentation Style	Organization of Arguments	Use of Information	Strength of Argument	Subtotal
Speaker 1					
Speaker 2					
Speaker 3					
Speaker 4					
Speaker 5					
Speaker 6					
Speaker 7					
Speaker 8					
Speaker 9					
Speaker 10					
				Total:	