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# Info sheet for debating methodology

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# Document control

## *Document history*

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## *Document distribution list*

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**Table of contents**

**Document control** **2**
Document history 2
Document distribution list 2
**Info sheet for Debating** **4**
Basic info 4
Explanation 4
How to demonstrate it 4
**More info and sources** **6**

# Info sheet for Debating

*Basic info*

**Methodology name:** Debating
**Also known as:** arguments, discussions, dialogues, forums, and disagreements
**Derived from:** -
**Author of the methodology:** Not attributed to any specific person, it's a long-standing practice.

*Explanation*

Example:
**Debate** is a discussion in which more than two people advocate opposing positions on a topic or question in an attempt to make an audience (or the other advocates) accept their position. A reasoned debate allows students to explore and gain an understanding of alternative viewpoints and, for the participants, develops communication, critical thinking and argumentation skills. The approach is often used in disciplines where practitioners are required to present and defend particular positions against other parties, such as Law, Politics, and Social Work. These skills however are also critical for other subjects where language, communication and critical thinking are essential. For example, students in design-based subjects, such as engineering, graphic or product design, could use the skills they have learned through debating to give well-qualified justifications for making particular design choices in response to a project brief (source: https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/shutel/2014/09/02/debate-an-approach-to-teaching-and-learning/)

*How to demonstrate it*

1. Introduce the topic

Step one is to introduce a topic. The topic depends on which class you teach. It is useful to create a topic that could have practical applications for the students to better understand the utility of the debate. For example, if you are a teacher of engineering you could debate whether *new structural designs of buildings are better or worse than the traditional structural designs used for buildings in the 19$^{th}$*

*century as it relates to sustainable development*. So the affirmative statement that would be debated is '*Old structural designs of buildings are more sustainable than new structural designs of buildings'*.

2. Assign the Affirmative and the Negative

There are two sides to any debate. So the online classroom will be divided into three sides, one will **argue for** and another **against** the resolution; then another group of students will be the **judges**. It is best to group your students into teams to research and argue the issue rather than expecting one student to do all the work. This way one student does not have all the pressure to perform, and the other group members can help with comprehension and strategy. During the debate, the other groups will serve as the *judges* and decide which side presented a stronger case voting at its *conclusion* for the *winners* of the debate.

3. Give Time for Research

Your students will need time to research the issue. Give the students at least 30 minutes to prepare for the debate. Encourage each group to form a strategy to decide who will do most of the talking during the debate though remind them that all of them are expected to participate in the research and strategy of the debate. Then, during the preparation time in anticipation of the *rebuttal (each side has at least two minutes to present their case)* after both sides have presented you then continue to the rebuttal phase or counterarguments to the arguments made for and against. Your students should discuss the points the opposition made with their teams and decide how to refute them.

4. Keep Track of Time

If you are unfamiliar with the *formal debate*, the speakers follow a set order. The following is the most basic debate structure:

1. First, the affirmative group receives two minutes to present their case to the audience.

2. The negative group then receives two minutes to present their case.

3. After both sides have a chance to speak, both teams receive two minutes to prepare a *rebuttal* and *summary*.

4. The order of speech is reversed now and the negative side presents their rebuttal and summary for the first two minutes.

The last to speak is the affirmative team who then presents their rebuttal and summary for two minutes. The debate is now concluded.
There are other structures that you can follow for debate, and they may be useful once your class is familiar with the process and strategy of debate, but if this is the first time your students are formally debating, keeping things simple is best.

5. Make a Judgment

Usually in a debate, the *winner* is the one who has presented the strongest case. To determine the *winner*, have the *audience* vote on which team they thought made the most convincing *argument*. With this, weigh your own opinion as to who communicated clearly and refuted the opponent's arguments best. This combination will identify your winners.
Your grading process, on the other hand, does not have to name a winner and a loser. As long as your students were able to communicate clearly, use good grammar, and have good pronunciation, the debate was a success, and their grades should reflect that success.
Although debates are often formal and structured, don't let them intimidate you. Controversial issues are always a great resource for ESL students' speaking practice, and formally discussing the issues is just as valuable as informal class discussions.
Source: (https://busyteacher.org/7245-conducting-class-debate-essential-tips.html)

## More info and sources

https://www.makeuseof.com/best-debate-sites/
https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/shutel/2014/09/02/debate-an-approach-to-teaching-and-learning/
https://busyteacher.org/7245-conducting-class-debate-essential-tips.html