

Let's Debate It!

Debate, noun, de·bate /di-'bāt, dē-\— a regulated discussion of a proposition or issue between two matched sides.

Supplies: Texts; Timer

There is no greater way to extend your learners' thinking than to have them choose one side of an issue and defend it with reasoning and personal opinion. Look for opportunities in your instruction where one idea is explained in two different ways. Read texts that cover both interpretations of the issue or proposition. Encourage your students to take notes about the information presented and start formulating their opinion on the topic.

Have them write an essay detailing what idea they are aligned with and why. Make sure they include at least three supportive facts and three opinions about why they believe their interpretation is the correct one. They will then have the opportunity to debate, or publicly discuss, their position with a classmate who has a different viewpoint.

A basic debate can be run in the following manner:

1. Instructor introduces the topic to the class and gives a one-sentence description of each viewpoint.
2. Two students stand at the front of the class. A coin is flipped to determine who will get to speak first. Use a timer from this point on.
3. The student who won the coin toss gets two minutes to state his or her case. Then two minutes is provided to the other student to do the same.
4. Next, each student gets another two minutes to share facts and opinions that support their viewpoint.
5. Now, the class is given the chance to ask questions of the student debaters. The classroom teacher should keep answers to one minute or less. If student #1 answers a question, student #2 gets 30 seconds to respond as well. The Q&A segment can run for five to ten minutes, or whatever feels appropriate.
6. Lastly, each student debater gets a final two minutes to restate their position.

