

Educational debates have been proven effective in helping students learn and effectively communicate in society (Omelicheva, et al., 2008). Through debating, students develop critical thinking and analysis abilities, learn to present arguments persuasively, speak confidently, and tackle uncertainties. Additionally, this type of active learning is engaging, motivating, and fun.

Formal debates usually consist of two opposing teams with an optional team/group for judging:

- **Affirmative** (*for*)
- **Opposing** (*against*)
- **Judges** (who appraise the quality of the arguments, or evidence) –optional

Preparation:

1. The learners are exposed to the readings/presentations on the debate topic.
2. Students are placed into teams and the debate resolution or question is displayed on the class board/screen with the words PRO and CON indicating the stance of teams.
3. The students flip a coin to determine if their team will be in favor of (*for*) or opposed to (*against*) the topic. If the coin lands on heads, the first team will debate in favor of (PRO = *for*) the topic. If it is tails, they will be opposed to (CON = *against*) the topic.

Instructions

1. The debate opens with the affirmative team (*for*) presenting their arguments, sequenced by a member of the opposing team, this is repeated for several rounds.
2. During the arguments presentation each team takes notes to use them during the rebuttal (counter argument).
3. Then, each team rebuts the arguments of the opposing team.
4. The instructor sends the rubric (*see attached*) beforehand and/or presents during the class. *Alternatively* the debate may not be graded but is still evaluated with points and feedback.

Suggested Rules of the Debate:

- a. Students sit in rows facing each other (if done in a face-to-face classroom).
- b. Within the teams, the learners have 5-10 minutes preparation time to develop a short statement with arguments for/against the topic.
- c. The first member of Affirmative team presents their statement, which is followed by the first member of the opposing team presenting their statement (set a specific limit like 3 to 5 minutes, for each person to talk).
- d. The same continues for as many rounds as there are students in each team.
- e. While one team is presenting their statement, the other tries to take notes and build counterarguments for rebuttal.
- f. A short, 5 minute recess is typically given for teams to prepare rebuttals.
- g. The opposing team starts with a rebuttal, trying to defend their counterarguments and adds new arguments (if applicable) to defeat the opponent.
- h. The first rebuttal of affirmative team is then given.
- i. Both teams get a chance for the second round of rebuttals/closing statements.
- j. Speakers should wait their turns with no interruptions and be respectful.

5. The instructor assigns points during the game and counts them in the end.
6. The instructor announces the winner as per the points, encourages everyone for participation and conducts a reflection session on what went well what could have been different, which arguments were great, etc.

Generally, the debates work well when done for about 20-30 minutes.

Rubric for Debates

Criteria	Points				Grade:
	4	3	2	1	
1. Organization & Clarity: Main arguments and responses are outlined in a clear and orderly way.	Completely clear and orderly presentation	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts	Clear in some parts but not overall	Unclear and disorganized throughout	
2. Use of Argument: Reasons are given to support the resolution,	Very strong and persuasive arguments given throughout	Many good arguments given, with only minor problems	Some decent arguments, but some significant problems	Few or no real arguments given, or all arguments given had significant problems	
3. Use of cross-examination and rebuttal: Identification of weakness in opponent team's arguments and ability to defend itself against attack.	Excellent cross-exam and defense against opponent team's objections	Good cross-exam and rebuttals, with only minor slip-ups	Decent cross-exam and/or rebuttals, but with some significant problems	Poor cross-exam or rebuttals, failure to point out problems in opponent team's position or failure to defend itself against attack.	
4. Presentation Style: Tone of voice, clarity of expression, precision of arguments all contribute to keeping audience's attention and persuading them of the team's case.	All style features were used convincingly	Most style features were used convincingly	Few style features were used convincingly	Very few style features were used, none of them convincingly	
					TOTAL SCORE: <hr/>

References

Debate Instructions. (n.d.). *Debate Instructions*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/frame_found_sr2/tns/tn-13.pdf

Debate Rubric. DEBATE GRADING RUBRIC. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <http://www.csun.edu/~ds56723/phil338/hout338rubric.htm>

Omelicheva, M. Y., & Avdeyeva, O. (2008). Teaching with lecture or debate? Testing the effectiveness of traditional versus active learning methods of instruction. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41(3), 603-607.