

Debate

Summary

A traditional class debate can be a useful tool for examining an issue. There are many debate formats – we provide one example.

Be sure to stress to students that there are many different perspectives that can fall in-between the extreme positions that are conventionally presented in a debate. Many of our collaborating teachers caution that debates tend to polarize an issue and should be used carefully. Setting norms with students and providing opportunities for discussion and debriefing are especially important.

Teacher Instructions

1. Divide students into teams. Assign one team to argue the yes (pro) position, and the second the opposing position. It is recommended that the assignment be made randomly.
2. Ask students to prepare briefs for each position as a team effort. Each team should prepare three arguments supportive of their position. Each argument should have three statements, each of which in turn is supported by three quotes. For each quote, a one-sentence summary must be provided, along with the source of the quote and a photocopy of the quote in its entirety. Visual aids are permitted, but can be used by the opposing side once introduced.
3. The debate has the overall structure outlined in the Student Handout: Debate Format.

Student Handouts

1. Debate Instructions
2. Position Sheet (for describing their position before and after the debate, and for recording questions) (Note: If using the Student Position handout, be sure to provide some time for completion of the initial position)
3. A scoring checklist for the actual debate is provided for teacher or student use. Debate briefs should be collected and checked by the instructor.

Debate Instructions

Preparation

Obtain current information from reputable sources.

Prepare a quality brief with all sections complete and properly formatted.

Present your information effectively and convincingly.

Reflect clearly on the ethical theory/theories and principles involved with the issue.

Components of the Debate Brief

Example (such as 'Should Thawing Unused Frozen Embryos be Permitted?'):

Statement/Point #1:

(ex: Primary authority for frozen pre-embryos rests with the two gamete providers, and they must agree to any disposition of the pre-embryos).

Ethical Theory/Principle: (ex: Respecting the individual gamete providers and their autonomy).

Quote A:

Provide a one sentence summary of the quote, its source, and a photocopy of the quote in its entirety.

Quote B:

Provide a one sentence summary of the quote, its source, and a photocopy of the quote in its entirety.

Quote C:

Provide a one sentence summary of the quote, its source, and a photocopy of the quote in its entirety.

Statement #2:

Ethical Theory/Principle:

Quotes

A

B

C

Statement #3:

Ethical Theory/Principle:

Quotes

A

B

C

Note that in addition to preparing arguments for their position, each team should anticipate their opponents' arguments and identify possible flaws or weaknesses in those arguments.

Debate Format:

Side	Presentation	Time
Opening Statements and Clarification		
YES/PRO team	Opening statements using three arguments	5 minutes
NO/CON team	Asks any clarifying questions	2 minutes
NO/CON team	Opening statements using three arguments	5 minutes
YES/PRO team	Asks any clarifying questions	2 minutes
Rebuttal (No new arguments presented)		
YES/PRO team	Repeats their opponents' arguments and tells what is wrong with the positions	3 minutes
NO/CON team	Repeats their opponents' arguments and tells what is wrong with the positions	3 minutes
Summary		
YES/PRO team	Summarizes their position by speaking to their opponents' counterpoints and closes with why their argument is best	3 minutes
NO/CON team	Summarizes their position by speaking to their opponents' counterpoints and closes with why their argument is best	3 minutes

Each side will also be expected to answer questions from the audience.

Position Sheet

Based upon my prior understanding of this controversial issue, my position is:

The main reasons that lead me to this position are:

1)

2)

3)

Questions for Debate Presenters:

YES/PRO

1)

2)

NO/CON

1)

2)

NOTES:

Based upon my reflections on the debate, as well as my prior knowledge, I now/still conclude that:

Debate Scoring Sheet

Subject of Debate _____ Pro or Con (Circle one)

Debate Element	Score (1-10)	Comments
Appearance of team/seriousness of team		
Delivery: Team members addressed remarks to the audience in clear, loud voices.		
Opening statements were well organized, complete and included three arguments		
Team members participated equally in opening statement.		
Arguments were related to ethical perspectives and principles		
Rebuttal was specific to arguments made in the opposing team's opening statement.		
Team members participated equally in the rebuttal.		
Summary provided and opponents' counterpoints addressed.		
Answers to audience questions were well thought out.		
Respect was shown throughout the debate for the opposing team. (No name calling, interruptions, etc.)		

Points Earned: _____ **/100 Points**