

Role-Play Debate

Description

Participating in a debate is an excellent way to show information you have learned. Debates encourage multiple perspectives by presenting a problem with its possible solutions. They encourage lively dialogue based on facts and opinions and are by nature often argumentative. Participating in a debate will give you practice in oral presentation, strengthen your leadership and problem-solving skills, and help you see another perspective. Conducting a debate requires much preparation by the participants but is an engaging and fun experience that results in real learning.

Examples of topics that might yield different points of view are “The death penalty should be banned in the United States” “K–12 schools should ban junk food sales” “Middle schools should have mandatory drug testing for participation in extracurricular activities” “The U.S. should rely on alternative energy sources instead of fossil fuels” “Zoos do more harm than good” and “The president of the U.S. should be elected by direct vote of the people.”

Planning

1. If you are using the debate to showcase a topic you have already researched, decide what related issue might produce two or more viewpoints. The debate should be balanced (have two valid positions) and researchable (information backing up each position must be available).
2. Prior to debating, each team, as a group, writes a persuasive essay including research that represents your position on the debate topic. Before you begin writing, read the writing rubric that will be used to evaluate your essay.
3. Books, current event articles in newspapers and magazines, websites and other Internet information, class notes, experts on the topic—any and all resources that would prepare you for the debate are sources you may use. Check with your teacher about whether you can consult notes or other sources during the debate.
4. In a role-play debate, the stakeholders in an issue to present their viewpoints. For example, a topic that might yield different points of view is “*Students should be required to wear uniforms to school.*” Those people with differing opinions (stakeholders) might include students, parents, principals, teachers, police officers, owners of clothing stores, etc. And each of the stakeholder groups could include differing opinions.
 - a. Decide your debate topic and identify all the stakeholders in the debate.
 - b. Then, on an index card, write each stakeholder and give each team member a card (random drawing).
 - c. Each person takes the position of the stakeholder and formulates the arguments he or she will present in a classroom debate on your topic.

- d. Let your teacher know when you are ready to present so that the debate can be scheduled.
- e. During the classroom debate, each stakeholder's point of view is presented, and afterward, the class asks questions of any stakeholder. The class decides whether the affirmative or negative presented the stronger case.

Assessing

1. Fill out a copy of the following rubric for yourself and each of your teammates; also, ask your teacher and your audience to rate your efforts.

DEBATE RUBRIC					
POINTS	4	3	2	1	SCORE
Use of voice; rapport with audience	Exciting, easy to hear	Easy to hear, little eye contact	Hard to hear, little eye contact	Not able to be heard, no eye contact	
Arguments	Relevant, lots of facts	Mostly relevant, some facts	Some relevancy, some facts	Lacks preparation	
Addressed other position's points	Clear, informed, effective arguments	Some clear, informed, effective arguments	Rarely clear, informed, effective arguments	Does not address other position	
Teamwork	Shared work	One person talked most of the time	One person talked all the time	No one is talking	
Overall	Prepared, effective, convincing	Sometimes convincing and effective	Rarely convincing and effective	Never convincing and effective	

2. What parts of the debate went really well? Why? What could you do better next time, and how could you prepare prior to the debate to make that happen?

Technology Connection

1. Read The Big Rainforest Debate by Wendy Zweig at <http://www2.lhric.org/ertc/Wendy/Wendy.htm>
2. See the Middle School Public Debate Program website www.middleschooldebate.com for debate topics, a research guide, debate procedures, and resources.