**Stage a Debate in Class**

**Students gain reasoning, listening and persuasion skills**



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by [**Melissa Kelly**](https://www.thoughtco.com/melissa-kelly-6107)

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Teachers look to debates as a fun way to study relevant topics and dig deeper into a subject than with a lecture. Participating in a classroom debate teaches students skills they can't get from a textbook, such as critical thinking, organizational, research, presentation and teamwork skills. You can debate any topic in your classroom using this debate framework. They make an obvious fit in history and social studies classes, but nearly any curriculum can incorporate a classroom debate.

**EDUCATIONAL DEBATE: CLASS PREPARATION**

Introduce the debates to your students by explaining the [rubric](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-rubric-p2-3212064) you will use to grade them. You can check out a sample [rubric](https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-create-rubrics-6752) or design your own. A few weeks before you plan to hold debates in class, distribute a list of possible topics worded as statements in favor of specific ideas. For example, you might posit that peaceful political demonstrations such as marches influence lawmakers. You would then assign one team to represent the affirmative argument for this statement and one team to present the opposing point of view.

Ask each student to write down the topics they like in order of preference. From these lists, partner students in debate groups with two for each side of the topic: pro and con.

Before you hand out the debate assignments, warn students that some might end up [debating](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-debate-p2-1690419) in favor of positions they don't actually agree with, but explain that doing this effectively reinforces the learning objectives of the project.

Ask them to research their topics and with their partners, establish factually supported arguments in favor of or against the debate statement, depending on their assignment.

**EDUCATIONAL DEBATE: CLASS PRESENTATION**

On the day of a debate, give students in the audience a blank rubric. Ask them to judge the debate objectively.

Appoint one student to moderate the debate if you don't want to fill this role yourself. Make sure all of the students but especially the moderator understand the protocol for the debate.

Begin the debate with the pro side speaking first. Allow them five to seven minutes of uninterrupted time to explain their position. Both members of the team must participate equally. Repeat the process for the con side.

Give both sides about three minutes to confer and prepare for their rebuttal. Begin the rebuttals with the con side and give them three minutes to speak. Both members must participate equally. Repeat this for the pro side.

You can expand this basic framework to include time for cross-examination between the presentation of positions or add a second round of speeches to each segment of the debate.

Ask your student audience to fill out the grading rubric, then use the feedback to award a winning team.

**TIPS**

* Consider giving [extra credit](https://www.thoughtco.com/extra-credit-strategies-7849) to audience members for well-thought-out questions following the debate.
* Prepare a list of simple rules for the debate and distribute it to all students prior to the debate. Include a reminder that students participating in the debate and in the audience should not interrupt the speakers.