

Debate – Rules of Engagement

What is a debate? A discussion about a subject on which people inevitably have different views.

It is important that you are able to put across your opinions and views. It is an important skill to be able to justify why you think something is true or untrue.

For / against – whether you agree or not.

Must be polite – particularly when disagreeing with someone.

Must be a formal motion.

The side that is 'for' the motion goes first.

Exercise

Strong reasons / weak reasons

In partners write a reason for each of the following resolutions. Then compare them with another group and decide whose is stronger.

Love is more important than money.

Reason: _____

Writing by hand is better than writing by computer.

Reason: _____

Women should stop working after they get married.

Reason: _____

Supporting your reasons

You need evidence to back up your reasons! The four typical kinds of evidence are:

- Examples.
- Common sense.
- Expert opinion.
- Statistics.

Look at the following resolution and reason. Then, think of support for the reason.

Resolution: Personality is more important than looks.

Reason: People never lose interest in looking at a person who has a good personality and living with them always makes us feel pleasant.

Support:

Example: for instance, let me give an example,...

Common sense: everyone knows, if...then, it's common knowledge that, in China it is said that...

Statistics: this will normally require research, but for now, make something up!

Expert Opinion: according to, to quote..., the book _____ says...

Writing Rebuttals

Rebuttal: Explains why one team disagrees with the other team.

Before the debate it is a good idea to brainstorm a list of strong ideas that your opponents could use. How can you disagree with them?

Look at the example rebuttal:

Resolution: Smoking should be banned in all public places.

Reason : Smoking is harmful for non-smokers.

Rebuttal:

Step 1: They say...(state the argument that you are about to refute).

“The other team said that smoking is harmful for non-smokers...”

Step 2: But I disagree... Or, That may be true but...

“That may be true but I think that if non-smokers want to avoid cigarette smoke, they can walk away from it”.

Step 3: because

“...because non-smokers should look out for their own health”.

Step 4: therefore

“Therefore, it isn't the responsibility of smokers to protect non-smokers”.

Now write a rebuttal for the following:

Resolution: Women should stop working when they have babies.

Affirmative Reason: Babies need to have their mothers close to them at all times.

Rebuttal:

Negative reason: If a woman feels fulfilled through her work, she will be happier, and therefore a better mother.

Rebuttal: