

HOW TO ORGANIZE A MINI-DEBATE

adapted from *Classroom Community Builders*

A debate, even a quick 20-minute one, gets students working with language in many ways and also working with the topic of the play. Debate forces students to think critically, express opinions, hedge or qualify statements, using transition words, rephrase, and summarize, all valuable language skills.

Students must also grapple with ideas, listen to others attentively, and use pragmatics to respond clearly, accurately, and persuasively

Procedure

1. Put students into two (or more) teams by position or opinion. You may want to assign positions or let students choose what team they want to be on.
2. Give each team 5-10 minutes to prepare a short opening statement, 3-5 minutes long, and decide who will deliver each speech.
3. Allow each team to deliver their opening statements without interruptions. Encourage both sides to take notes and prepare rebuttals.
4. After the opening statements, alternate between both sides, asking students to raise their hands and address questions or comments to the other team. Continue this for a set period of time.
5. At the end, declare a winner based on who was more persuasive. You can consider how many reasons each team came up with for their side and also how well they answered the concerns of the other team.
6. As an extension, students can present their argument for a future class in the form of a poster or a slide show. If they are debating about a topic related to learning English, these posters can be valuable resources.

Variation: A formal debate.

In a formal debate, the order of speakers and the purpose of each speech is set by the rules of the debate. While you can adapt those rules as you see fit, the traditional order and function are as follows:

Team A Opening Statement

Team B Opening Statement

Team A Rebuttal

Team B Rebuttal

(Repeat Rebuttal speeches, if the teams are large)

Team A Closing Statement

Team B Closing Statement.

In a formal debate, the Opening Statements present the team's point of view and main reasons for that view. The Rebuttal speeches are mainly to answer the positions made by the opponents. They are general shorter. In the Closing Statements, each team repeats its most important ideas and reasons for them, which may include saying why they think the other team's logic was incorrect. You can find more detailed information about debates online.



For plays you can use and additional activities, check out
Integrated Skills Through Drama published by Alphabet Publishing.

Her Own Worst Enemy by Alice Savage

Only the Best Intentions by Alice Savage (in press)

Rising Water by Alice Savage (in press)

www.alphabetpublishingbooks.com/integrated-skills-through-drama