

Debate Structure

A debate is based around a motion. A motion is a statement that sets the topic for a debate or argument.

Debates are used in the Houses of Parliament. They help MPs and Lords make informed decisions on a subject by presenting both sides of an argument. The overall decision is then made by each person casting a vote, for or against.

Split the children into three groups, one for the motion and one against, the final group acting as the audience. It is important for all the children to remember to vote based on the strength of the arguments that are presented to them, and not to think about their own personal opinions.

Brainstorm

Each child should think about their argument and their opinion on the motion. They should write their ideas down on a post-it note. As a group, with one person leading as the 'chair', the children should share all their ideas, sticking the post-its on a large sheet of paper, so that they can see all the arguments.

Organising

Each group decides on three main arguments they are going to use in the debate. To do this they must look at the ideas generated during the brainstorm to select the best ones, or join together similar arguments to make a fuller case.

Writing the speeches

Using the template, the children should write their arguments for the debate. Also think about what the other side might say, so you can prepare to challenge their argument.

Holding the debate

These are the rules followed by the Houses of Parliament:

1. The debate is chaired by the Speaker, whose decision on all matters is final.
2. You can only speak ONCE during the debate. Your speech should be about two minutes long. If you can, develop an argument rather than making a single point.
3. You can 'intervene' as many times as you like. To intervene is to ask a question about a point being made, e.g. 'Are those statistics up-to-date?'
4. You can use notes to help you with your speech and make notes during the debate.
5. If you want to speak during the debate, you should catch the Speaker's eye by standing up as soon as someone has finished speaking. The Speaker will pick someone from those standing up.

6. If you spot someone breaking these rules, tell the Speaker. This is called a 'point of order'.

The order of the debate

- The Speaker presents the motion.
- The first speaker presents an argument for the motion.
- The first speaker presents an arguments against the motion.
- The second speaker presents an argument for the motion.
- The second speaker presents an argument against the motion.
- The third speaker presents an argument for the motion.
- The third speaker presents an argument against the motion.
- This side to side motion continues until everyone has had their say.

- A speaker sums up the arguments for the motion.
- A speaker sums up the arguments against the motion.
- The Speaker re-reads the motion.

Voting

- The children then vote for or against the motion, depending on which they thought were the most convincing and well-constructed arguments. They should remember to vote on how good the arguments were, not be swayed by their own personal opinion. They should do this by writing 'for' or 'against' on a piece of paper and putting it into a ballot box.
- The teacher will count the votes and give the result to the Speaker, who will announce the result of the vote.

Also, think about what the other side might say, and prepare a challenge to the argument.

The children can use the material provided on our website to research their argument and should also discuss their ideas as a group. If they want to discuss their ideas further using books or the internet, here are some questions to consider:

For

- What life was like for children in workhouses during this time.

- The importance of being given an education during this time.
- Attitudes towards child labour at this time.
- The idea of 'childhood' and how this has developed over time.

Against

- The dangers of child labour.
- What life was like for children at this time, both rich and poor.
- The importance of being given an education during this time.
- How ideas around child labour have changed since this time.