

DEBATE AND PERSUASIVE WRITING



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<http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/debate.htm>

DEBATE BASICS



1. BASIC TERMS

- **Debate:** a competition in which two opposing teams make speeches to support their arguments and disagree with those of the other team.
- **Resolution:** the opinion about which two teams argue.
- **Affirmative team:** agrees with the resolution.
- **Negative team:** disagrees with the resolution.
- **Rebuttal:** explains why one team disagrees with the other team.
- **Judges:** decide the winner.

2. GIVING SUPPORT FOR YOUR REASONS

Support consists of evidence. The four kinds of evidence:

- **Example:** from your own experience or from what you heard or read.
- **Common Sense:** things that you believe everybody knows.
- **Expert Opinion:** the opinions of experts ~ this comes from research.
- **Statistics:** numbers ~ this also comes from research.

Smoking should be banned in all public places.

Example: For example / for instance / let me give an example

Whenever I go to a restaurant or bar and there are people smoking near me, I feel that I am breathing their smoke. This makes me a smoker even though I don't want to be.

Common Sense: Everyone knows / if...then / it's common knowledge that
Secondhand smoke is very unhealthy for nonsmokers.

Statistics:

Secondhand smoke causes about 250,000 respiratory infections in infants and children every year, resulting in about 15,000 hospitalizations each year.

Expert Opinion: According to.../ to quote.../ the book _____ says...

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "secondhand smoke causes approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers each year."

Opinions, Preferences: I think..., In my opinion..., I'd like to..., I'd rather..., I'd prefer..., The way I see it..., As far as I'm concerned..., If it were up to me..., I suppose..., I suspect that..., I'm pretty sure that..., It is fairly certain that..., I'm convinced that..., I honestly feel that, I strongly believe that..., Without a doubt,...

Disagreeing:

I don't think that..., Don't you think it would be better..., I don't agree, I'd prefer..., Shouldn't we consider..., But what about..., I'm afraid I don't agree..., Frankly, I doubt if..., Let's face it, The truth of the matter is..., The problem with your point of view is that...

Giving Reasons and offering explanations: To start with, The reason why..., That's why..., For this reason..., That's the reason why..., Many people think..., Considering..., Allowing for the fact that..., When you consider that...

3. REBUTTAL

- **STEP 1: "They say ..."**
 - State the argument that you are about to refute so that the judges can follow easily. Take notes during your opponent's speeches so you will be clear about what they argued.
 - **"The other team said that** smoking is harmful for nonsmokers."
- **STEP 2: "But I disagree..." Or "That may be true, but..."**
 - **"That may be true, but** I think that if nonsmokers want to avoid cigarette smoke, they can walk away from it."
- **STEP 3: "Because ..."**
 - **"Because** nonsmokers should look out for their own health."
- **STEP 4: "Therefore..."**
 - **"Therefore** it is not the responsibility of smokers to protect nonsmokers."

<p>Summarize the REASON here:</p> <p>Is this reason clear? Is this reason strong?</p> <p>Summarize the SUPPORT here:</p> <p>Is the support clear? Good examples/common sense: Expert opinion/statistics:</p>	<p>REBUTTAL</p> <p>They disagree because...</p> <p>Therefore...</p> <p>Is this rebuttal clear? Did they use a strong because and therefore?</p>
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STRATEGIES

1. If you don't want to debate a point, don't bring it up.
2. Don't get mad—get even through use of logic.
3. Use the moderator to your advantage. Know the rules and insist they be followed.
4. Control the floor when it's your turn. Asking an open question gives the floor to the other side.
5. Negative body language (like rolling the eyes) does not serve to give the judge/audience a positive impression of you.
6. Appear to be listening sympathetically—then devastate the other side with logical attack.
7. Use formal language. Slang, name-calling or cursing makes you appear unintelligent and ill-prepared.
8. Ham it up. Speak with passion and intensity, but not melodrama.
9. Loud is not logic. A quiet voice can command the most attention. An old trick of politicians is to lower the voice so that everyone listens more closely.
10. Choose your experts and sources wisely. One young woman who has had an abortion is not an expert on the subject.
11. Take time to read or quote the literature exactly.
12. Use short anecdotes and famous quotes when possible.
13. Know the position of the other side as well as you know your own. This way you won't be surprised.
14. Study the logical fallacies and hold the opposition accountable for logic blunders.
15. Save your best quote, strongest point and highest-impact emotional appeal for summation and final statement.
16. Don't sound patronizing or condescending. It doesn't come across well.
17. If possible, stand to speak. Walk around courtroom style. It's very impressive and intimidating to the opposition.
18. Don't overuse any single strategy.
19. Don't say "I don't know" or "you're right" without following it up with a redirecting statement such as, "That may be true, but have you ever thought about . . ."

<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Krieger-Debate.html>

EVALUATING THE RELIABILITY OF SOURCES



1. What is the source of the information being considered?
2. List the factors that are relevant to the reliability of the source in the following categories:
 - **Publication**
 - Date - is the information current, or does it need to be current?
 - Reputation of publication - is the source well known and reputable?
 - Kind of publication - is it a scientific report, eyewitness account, a work of fiction?
 - **Author or Speaker**
 - Qualifications - is he an expert in his field?
 - Bias - is he one-sided in his point-of-view?
 - Values - what does the author value in regards to the topic?
 - Chance for personal gain - does the author stand to benefit from his position?
 - **Consistency of Information**
 - Confirmation or corroboration - can anyone else make the same claims?
 - **Means of Obtaining the Information**
 - Witness or researcher - was the author or speaker a first-hand witness to the information or did he gather it from some other source?
 - Equipment - what kind of equipment was used to record information?
3. Answer as many of the questions as you can, and determine if the answer would indicate a reliable source, an unreliable source, or an uncertainty for each.
4. Weigh the factors present and your ratings of the evidence and make a reasoned judgment of reliability of the source

Evaluating Web Pages

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>

<http://mciunix.mci.k12.pa.us/~spjvweb/evaluating.html>

Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/webcrit.html>

Why Should I Take This Author Seriously?

<http://mciu.org/%7Espjvweb/whyauthor.html>

The Quality Information Checklist

<http://www.quick.org.uk/menu.htm>

ANALYZING ARGUMENTS



Don't confuse "having an argument" with the persuasive writing term, "argument". When you "have an argument" with someone, that implies a type of conflict or quarrel. In persuasive writing, your "argument" is your position on an issue, or your point-of-view that you will defend with good reasoning.

Look in the editorial section of the newspaper or other sources for a piece of persuasive writing to investigate. Leave your own opinions and biases at home. Listen carefully and with an open mind. Put on your Critical Thinking Cap to analyze the argument . . .



ANALYZING THE ARGUMENT

- What is the point of the argument?
- What statement is the argument trying to convince you to believe?
- What is the conclusion?
- Is the conclusion stated or implied?
- What reasons are given?
- Is the reasoning complete?
- Are there any hidden claims or assumptions?
- Are the claims clear, or do any seem ambiguous?
- Are the claims complete, or is anything left out?
- Are the claims relevant, should they affect our conclusion?

EVALUATING THE CLAIMS AND EVIDENCE

- Do you know whether this claim is true or not?
- How do you know, or how could you find out?
- Is there reason to doubt this statement?
- What would support it?
- What would undermine it?

EVALUATING THE RELIABILITY OF THE SOURCE

- Where did this information come from?
- How could the source know?
- Is the source reliable?
- What biases does the source have?
- What does the source stand to gain or lose?
- Did the source leave out any relevant evidence?
- How does that missing evidence affect any conclusion about the issue?

YOUR TURN:

SUGGEST WAYS TO MAKE
THE ARGUMENT STRONGER.

ANALYZING A POINT-OF-VIEW PIECE

ARTICLE TITLE: _____

ARTICLE AUTHOR: _____

SOURCE: _____

- What is the point of the argument?

- What statement is the argument trying to convince you to believe?

- What reasons are given for support?

- Are there reasons to doubt this supporting information?

EVALUATING THE RELIABILITY OF THE SOURCE

- Where did this information come from?

- Is the source reliable?

- What biases does the source have?

YOUR OPINION

- What is your opinion/feeling about the issue?

CRITICAL READING ON DEBATE ISSUES

Team members _____

As you research your debate issue, keep the following in mind:

- Fact and Opinion
- Cause and Effect
- Source Reliability
- Propaganda Techniques:
Bandwagon, Scare Tactics, Slanted Words
- Bias or Stereotype

Facts

Opinions?

Causes followed by effects?

How reliable is the source (qualifications of author, date of publication)?

Propaganda, Bias, or Stereotype?

Title _____ Author _____

Publication date _____ URL _____

DEBATE ORGANIZER

RESOLVED:

Make sure you include quotations and note sources as part of your evidence.

Argument 1:	Evidence:
Argument 2:	Evidence:
Argument 3:	Evidence:
Argument 4:	Evidence:

Anticipate, and be prepared to counter, the arguments of your opposition.

OPPOSING POSITION:	
Argument 1:	But:
Argument 2:	But:
Argument 3:	But:
Argument 4:	But:

Clinch your argument with a strong summary, your most compelling evidence, a powerful quote.

CLOSING:

Adapted by Joyce Valenza <http://mciu.org/%7Espjvweb/debateorg.html>

PHRASES TO USE IN DEBATE



It is important to remember that you have been placed in your group based on what seems to be the *opposite* of what you really think. Use the clues and ideas below to help you create an argument for your appointed point of view with your team members. Below you will find phrases and language helpful in expressing opinions, offering explanations and disagreeing.

OPINIONS, PREFERENCES:

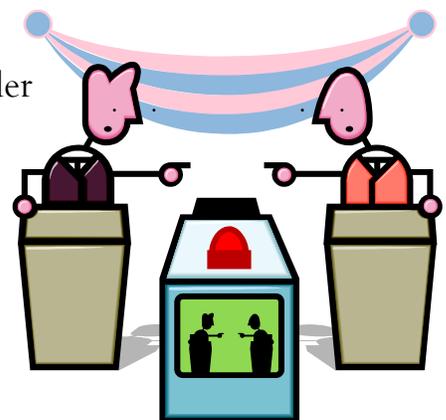
I think..., In my opinion..., I'd like to..., I'd rather..., I'd prefer..., The way I see it..., As far as I'm concerned..., If it were up to me..., I suppose..., I suspect that..., I'm pretty sure that..., It is fairly certain that..., I'm convinced that..., I honestly feel that, I strongly believe that..., Without a doubt,....

DISAGREEING:

I don't think that..., Don't you think it would be better..., I don't agree, I'd prefer..., Shouldn't we consider..., But what about..., I'm afraid I don't agree..., Frankly, I doubt if..., Let's face it, the truth of the matter is..., The problem with your point of view is that...

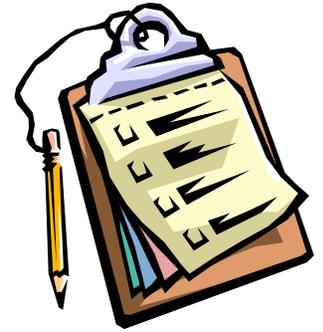
GIVING REASONS AND OFFERING EXPLANATIONS:

To start with, The reason why..., That's why..., For this reason..., That's the reason why..., Many people think..., Considering..., Allowing for the fact that..., When you consider that...



CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING YOUR ARGUMENT

- Do you clearly state the conclusion and define necessary terms? State your conclusion clearly and directly; do not make your reader hunt for the conclusion.
- Is the material that you included relevant to your conclusion? Omit anything that is not pertinent to your conclusion. For instance, a discussion of the availability of indoor gyms or exercise tapes would have no bearing on whether or not exercise is good.
- Is the argument sound? Do the premises provide good support for the conclusion? An argument is sound if it is well supported by reasons—either one very strong reason or several weaker reasons that, when considered together, give it strong support.



A good argument can have one strong reason, like a solid pedestal that holds up the top of a table.



Or it can have several reasons, each of which may not be strong by itself, but when considered together, the support is solid.



When the reasons are weak or do not support the conclusion, the tabletop, like a poor argument, falls.

A tabletop can be supported by one very strong column (strong reason) or by several weak columns (weak reasons). But if it is supported by only a few weak columns (weak reasons), it will collapse.

- Have you considered the credibility of your experts? People are usually credible when they are free from bias and can provide empirical data or research that supports their findings.
- Are there assumptions that need to be stated explicitly or need to be supported? Assumptions can be tricky. Have you deliberately omitted anything that is important to your conclusion? If so, add it now.
- Is the essay well organized, with different issues addressed separately? Your essay should include an introduction that presents your conclusion, a body that includes your reasons, qualifiers, and counterarguments, and a concluding paragraph that restates your introduction and main thesis statement.

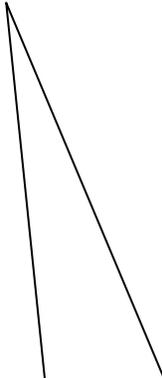
C - A - R - S
Credibility =
Accuracy
Reasonableness
Support

An **assumption** is a premise that is implied, or necessary for the argument to be valid, but is unstated.

Qualifiers place restrictions on the conclusion—they tell us the conditions under which the conclusion is true.

- ❑ Have you fairly presented alternative points of view and counterarguments?
You should not dwell on counterarguments, but if you do not mention them, then your audience will, and that can prove disastrous!

- ❑ Have you used correct grammar and a clear writing style?
Proper grammar, spelling, and word usage are essential; you should always have a dictionary and thesaurus nearby when writing. A good writer is able to simplify difficult material, and to present it in a clear and organized manner.



Reasons that run against a conclusion are **counterarguments**. The addition of the counter-argument may weaken the support for the conclusion, but if it weakens it only a small amount, then the conclusion will still remain as a statement that you believe to be true. If there is strong support for a conclusion and weak arguments that run counter to the conclusion, then overall, the argument is still moderately strong. In thinking about the overall strength of an argument, you need to consider the strength of the support for the conclusion and the strength of the counterarguments that weaken the conclusion.

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, CONVINC ME!

ON YOUR MARK . . .



Here is your "To Do" List:

- ❑ ESTABLISH facts to support an argument
- ❑ CLARIFY relevant values for your audience (also be aware of the objections of the audience)
- ❑ PRIORITIZE and SEQUENCE the facts and values in importance to build the argument
- ❑ OFFER convincing conclusions
- ❑ PERSUADE your audience that your evidence and conclusions are based upon the agreed-upon facts and shared values
- ❑ HAVE THE CONFIDENCE to communicate your persuasion in writing

GET SET . . .

Use these strategies along with a plan sheet as you prepare for a persuasive writing assignment:

- ❑ Write out the questions in your own words.
- ❑ Think of the questions posed in the assignment while you are reading and researching.
- ❑ As you discover facts to support your argument, consider:
 - the source of the facts for reliability and accuracy
 - the source of the facts for prejudice or bias
 - the values that "color" the facts or the issue
 - what you think of the author's argument
- ❑ List out facts; consider their importance: prioritize, edit, sequence, discard, and ask yourself "What's missing that would help me convince others?"
- ❑ List possible audience reactions (you can then appeal to their emotion, shared beliefs, and logic)



GO! (CONVINCE ME) . . .

Start writing a first draft (keep your facts and evidence in mind and, do not concern yourself with grammar or spelling at this time)

- ❑ Write your first paragraph
 - Introduce the topic
 - Inform the reader of your point of view
 - Entice the reader to continue with the rest of the paper
 - Introduce your main points to develop (do not give the details, that comes in the body paragraphs!)



- ❑ Develop the body - separate paragraphs for each main point
 - Keep your voice active
 - Quote sources to establish authority
 - Use strong word choice
 - Focus on logical arguments
 - Establish a “flow” by using transitional words and phrases
 - Put the paragraph with your strongest argument last
- ❑ End with a powerful conclusion
 - Summarize your opening statement as well as the main points
 - Suggest an action for the audience to take
 - Leave the audience with something to think about

Next, take a break from your writing. Later, re-read your paper with a fresh mind and a sharp pencil. Ask yourself:

- ❑ Does this make sense? Am I convinced?
- ❑ Will this convince my readers?
- ❑ Will they understand my values, and agree with my facts?
- ❑ Is my punctuation, spelling, and grammar correct?
- ❑ What friend can I ask to read this and respond to my argument?
- ❑ Was the friend convinced?
- ❑ How can I revise for ideas, organization, word choice and sentence fluency?

And finally:

- ❑ Make a final draft of your persuasive essay
- ❑ Celebrate a job well done, with the confidence that you have done your best.

AT THE FINISH LINE . . .

When we write or speak persuasively, we may be dealing with issues that the audience has very strong opinions about. By presenting an opposing position, we open ourselves up to criticism.

Keep these points in mind:

- ❑ Consider criticism as a test of developing your powers of persuasion. Try not to take it personally.
- ❑ If your facts are criticized, double-check them, and remember to cite your sources.
- ❑ If your values are criticized, understand that values can be very deep-rooted. Sometimes we need to “agree to disagree”.
- ❑ Remember: your success in persuading others assumes that the other person is open to being persuaded!



Modified from the work of Joe Landsberger of the University of St. Thomas Learning Center. Used with permission www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/wrtstr4.htm

IDEAS FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING AND DEBATE



I. PERSUASIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

- A. Take an editorial or opinion article from the newspaper: identify the reasons used for support as you analyze the argument. Then, rewrite the letter or article, revising the text, adding to or amending the reasoning; substitute stronger words (especially verbs); add a simile; combine an image with reasons. Two sources include:

My Virtual Newspaper - links to over 200 newspaper Op-Ed sections

<http://www.refdesk.com/paper3.html#edit>

Microsoft Template Gallery - templates of opinion letters

<http://search.officeupdate.microsoft.com/TemplateGallery/ct154.asp>

- B. Write a letter to the school principal requesting her or him to make a change in school policy or rules.
- C. Write two versions of an advertisement for a product. Each version should target a different audience. Consider the opinions of each audience and what words or phrases, and line of reasoning might appeal to each.
- D. Write a campaign speech for a school office or position. This could also be done humorously, such as a speech a dog might give to a be elected president of a group of cats.
- E. Use Aristotle's "appeals" when writing an advertisement for some unusual goods and services, such as a Homework Robot, the odd sock in the laundry, hurricanes, or chocolate-flavored pasta.
- F. Write a script for the conversation between you and your parents where you try to persuade them to allow you to do something.
- G. Using novel characters from the literature you are studying, write to convince one of the characters to take a certain action.
- H. Write a debate between fictional characters such as a debate about "the best meal" between the Wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood* and the Fox from the fable, *Fox and the Grapes*.

- I. Using topics and issues in your Social Studies curriculum, write a persuasive essay from the point-of-view of a historical character. An example might be “Join the Cause of the Patriots” or “Uphold the Cause of the Loyalists”.
- J. Examine the Declaration of Independence and take note of the last part of paragraph two that states, “To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.” Proceed to count the number of facts and examples that the writer, Thomas Jefferson, submitted. Follow up by writing your own “Declaration” that presents a point-of-view, provides three facts to support the position, and a suggests an action:

As a student, I hold these truths to be self-evident: that children need worthwhile activities after school and that our community has failed to provide these activities...

II. POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DEBATE OR PERSUASIVE ESSAYS

A. Take a Position

- It is more fun to be a child/adult.
- It is better to be a girl/boy.
- Hunting as a sport should/should not be eliminated.
- Superstar athletes deserve/do not deserve their high salaries.
- Trick-or-treating should/should not be eliminated.
- Students should/should not be required to wear school uniforms.
- The hours in the school day should be lengthened/shortened.
- The number of school days in a school year should be lengthened/shortened.
- Students should/should not get to make up the school lunch menu.
- Recess at elementary schools should/should not be eliminated.
- Classes such as P.E., music, or art should/should not be eliminated from the curriculum.

B. Convince Someone:

- This rule at home should be changed.
- This school or classroom rule should be changed.
- My parents should allow me to have this item or do this activity.
- Children should get an allowance.
- All family members should share chores around the house.
- Recycling is important and necessary for our planet.
- This book should win an award.
- This special day should become a new national holiday.

TEN TIPS FOR PRESENTERS



1. WHO'S OUT THERE?

The number one rule of every presentation is understanding your audience. Before you develop your outline and materials, determine who your audience is, their reason for attending your presentation, what information they expect to walk away with, and why your presentation is important to them. The more you know about your audience the more successful your presentation will be.

2. GET IT CHECKED

Have someone review your presentation when it's done. Once you've worked on it for awhile you'll begin to overlook even the most obvious errors. Have someone edit it for grammar, spelling (spell checker won't flag the difference between "hear" and "here"), organization, flow, and continuity. Peer review is good for reviewing the accuracy of the information.

3. TRANSITION WELL??

One way to help your audience understand the connection between your main presentation points is through transition sentences. Transition sentences are short comments that carry the audience from one point to the next. A good transition is like an internal summary; it summarizes what you just covered and briefly explains how it relates to the next topic. Write transition statements in the margin of your presentation so you don't forget.

4. GET US INVOLVED!

Ask questions of your audience. It keeps them alert, thoughtful, involved, and observant. Asking questions also helps you judge if you're giving the right level of information.

5. GET THE PICTURE?

Use pictures instead of words when possible. But don't try to pack tons of information into one picture. Try using illustrations that build in complexity from slide to slide. Try to keep your slides simple. If possible use the services of a graphic artist to help you use color effectively and to simplify your slides and pictures.

6. DON'T WING IT!

Your slides are not a substitute for a well-written script. Create your outline, write your script, have it edited, and rehearse it before the day of your presentation.

7. LOST IN THE FOREST

Try to keep the big picture in your audience's mind. Don't let them get lost in the trees. Periodically stop and refer back to the "big picture". Explain where you are in the overall organization of your presentation.

8. WE DIDN'T BRING OUR SNOW SHOVELS

When using graphs, tables, and charts, make sure you're using them to clarify not "snow" the audience. Some graphs, tables, and charts can be difficult to see. Make sure you have paper copies available. And, don't speak to every aspect of the chart, just the critical information.

And remember, they're "visual aids" not "visual crutches." Use them as a supplement to your presentation not as a substitute.

9. FIRED UP

Let your enthusiasm show. Nothing sells your presentation and yourself better than communicating your enthusiasm. Audiences recognize and appreciate a presenter who presents with passion. If the audience can recognize your belief and confidence, that will add to your credibility and to your message.

10. THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

Try writing the summary first.

Most people remember no more than five key presentation points.

When you begin writing the presentation, start with the last slide. That's right, when you're ready to create your presentation, forget the details for a minute, forget the presentation's organization, and instead write out your conclusion or summary slide first. If you do it right, it will emphasize the most important points you plan to make.



“Quote, Unquote”

A fact in itself is nothing. It is valuable only for the idea attached to it, or for the proof which it furnishes.

Claude Bernard

Every man has a right to his opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts.

Bernard M. Baruch

When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion, kind unassuming persuasion, should be adopted.

Abraham Lincoln

Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

Mark Twain (inscription beneath his bust in the Hall of Fame)

Too often we enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

John F. Kennedy

Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.

Colin Powell

The foolish and the dead alone never change their opinions.

James Russell Lowell

Most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do.

James Robinson

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.
Aristotle

If you cannot convince them, confuse them.
Harry S. Truman

An appeal to the reason of the people has never been known to fail in the long run.

James Russell Lowell

Comment is free but facts are sacred.
Charles P. Scott

If you get all the facts, your judgment can be right; if you don't get all the facts, it can't be right.

Bernard M. Baruch

It is the difference of opinion that makes horse races.

Mark Twain

My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts!

Unknown

There are as many opinions as there are experts.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt