

Liven up learning with Diana Funtana ESL Productions!



Get in on the Act V: Debates

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Introduction

Task: to conduct a formal debate

Level: intermediate to advanced

Duration: 3-4 lessons

Materials: worksheets and evaluation

Debates belong in any ESL curriculum that focuses on speaking. Organized, formal debates give students the opportunity to:

- Express and exchange opinions
- Use more formal, as opposed to colloquial, language and vocabulary specific to a defined topic
- Engage all members of the team, even those who are shy and soft-spoken
- Develop research and critical thinking skills
- Prepare for academic studies if students plan to study at an English language university

Although debates require advanced language skills, ESL students can begin at the intermediate level by choosing basic topics, and then working their way up. It's never too early to start.

This package includes:

- a lesson plan with a structured outline of how to carry out a formal debate, vocabulary and practice worksheets
- lists of debate topics from basic to controversial
- a rubric that both students and teacher can complete.

Lesson Plan

1. Warm-up

Discuss the following in small groups or with the class as a whole:

- How do people exchange opinions?
- What are some controversial issues that people have strong and diverse opinions on?
- What is the difference between a debate and a discussion?
- What is the purpose of a debate?

2. Introduce the structure of a debate
 - Explain the following parts of a debate:
 - Resolution
 - Affirmative and negative sides
 - rebuttal
 - There are different formats for debates, but I found the following to work quite well in my classes. Go over the structure of a debate on pages 5-6.
3. Language and vocabulary
 - Introduce and practice the phrases and vocabulary on pages 7-8.
 - Remind students that they should use formal, polite and clear language, and be respectful at all time.
4. Practice
 - For students to whom formal debating is new, here are a couple of exercises to help develop critical thinking skills:
 - Supporting an argument
 - Go over ways to support an argument: examples, facts and figures, trends and reasons
 - Practice 1: In pairs or groups of 3-4 have students support the statements on pages 9-10.
 - Practice 2: Using the worksheet, Evaluating Arguments, on page 11-12 , have students decide if which arguments support or refute the resolution or which are irrelevant.
 - Rebutting an argument
 - Put students in small groups of 4-6 and have them sit 2x2 or 3x2 facing each other
 - Cut the statements on pages 9-10 into strips and put them into a container
 - Model a few examples by drawing a statement and calling upon one student to rebut, and the others to critique the rebuttal.
 - Taking turns, one student from Side A picks a statement. reads it out and supports it; one student from Side B rebuts
 - Another alternative is for students to come up with their own

statements.

5. Research and preparation

- Give students time to research their topic and to prepare their arguments in class. The amount of time needed will depend, of course, on how difficult the topic is, and also on the proficiency level of the class. Here it is important to monitor their work and offer advice.

6. Presentation

- Set the teams up at the front of the class.
- Review the structure so that the teams know what procedure to follow.
- Hand-out the Debate rubric on page 14 and instruct the class to fill it out individually or in pairs (this will save some time) as each team presents their arguments.

7. Judging

- Give the class some time to confer and tally up the scores on the rubric and discuss the results.

8. Evaluation and feedback

Diana Funtana ESL Productions / Debate Structure

The following structure is set up for teams of three members. The debate will take at least 60 minutes and time limits for each part will vary.

1. Affirmative team: (3-5 minutes)

- 1st speaker defines the topic
- presents the affirmative position by outlining main arguments
- presents first argument

2. Negative team: (3-5 minutes)

- 1st speaker rejects the resolution and presents the negative position by outlining main arguments
- presents first argument

3. Affirmative team: (5-7 minutes)

- Reaffirms the team's position and rebuts the negative side's first argument
- Presents the second argument

4. Negative team: (5-7 minutes)

- Reaffirms the team's position and rebuts the affirmative's first argument
- Presents the second argument

5. Affirmative team: (5-7 minutes)

- Reaffirms the team's position and rebuts the negative side's second argument
- Presents the third argument
- Summarizes the team's position and arguments

6. Negative team: (5-7 minutes)

- Reaffirms the team's position and rebuts the affirmative side's second argument
- Presents the third argument
- Summarizes the team's position and arguments

7. Break (10 minutes)

- Teams take time to formulate final rebuttal arguments

8. Negative team: (3-5 minutes)

- Rebutts affirmative team's arguments and makes closing statements reaffirming the team's position

9. Affirmative team: (3-5 minutes)

- Rebutts negative team's arguments and makes closing statements reaffirming the team's position

10. Voting:

- Give students a few minutes to review their evaluation and tally the score on the rubric before asking for the final vote

11. General discussion: (depends on available time and can include audience)

- Can include a discussion of the team's performance and/or the topic of the debate

Expressing an opinion

We think / believe / find that ...

We support / favour / advocate / stand for ...

We are for / in favour of / against / opposed to ...

Our opinion / position / stand / viewpoint on ... is ...

It is our opinion / position / view that ...

Adverbs that add conviction to an opinion

Absolutely / completely / entirely / definitely / strongly

Frankly / honestly / personally

Supporting an argument with:

- Facts

It is clear / obvious / evident that ...

As a matter of fact / in fact ...

The fact is ...

We'd like to point out that ...

- Figures

19% / nearly one-fifth of Internet users are located in the United States.

38 out of 100 people surf the Internet.

In 2002, alcohol accounted for more than \$14.5 billion in medicate costs, or \$463 per capita in Canada.

- Trends

The current trend is / indicates ...

Greenhouse gas emission increased by 17 percent from 1990-2007.

Many, but not all human sources of greenhouse gas emissions are expected to rise in the future.

- Examples

Let me offer the following example: ...

For example / instance ...

As an example / that is

In the case of ...

Alternative sources of energy such as solar, wind power, and geothermal ...

- Factors and reasons

The dominant / main / principle factor in ... is ...

One factor / contributor / reason for ... is ...

Referring to a source

According to a report / interview / an article in the *New York Times* ...

A study / research conducted by the University of California shows /

Diana Funtana ESL Productions / Phrases

proves / reveals / concludes / has discovered / has determined that ...
Experts / scientists / researchers say / claim / state / have found that ...
To quote / cite a well-known / reputable / reliable / credible / expert source
...

Emphasizing a point

We emphasize / stress / point out / repeat / call your attention to ...
Let me say this again / repeat / reiterate ...
Let me make it clear / perfectly clear that ...

Adding a point

In addition / moreover / furthermore ...
Also / as well / besides that ...
Incidentally / by the way / one more thing ...

Referring to a point

In regard / in reference to ...
Concerning / pertaining ...
As far as ... goes / is concerned ...

Disagreeing with an opinion

We disagree ...
We cannot share your opinion ...
We object / take exception to ...

Making contradictions

We have to contradict / challenge your argument.
If you look at the facts you'll see that the opposite / contrary is true.
Contrary to what you said / stated / claimed ...

Footnote: These phrases and more can be found in *Perfect Phrases for ESL Conversation Skills* by Diane Engelhardt.

Diana Funtana ESL Productions / Practice Statements

This room is too cold / warm.

This is a good / bad school.

This is / isn't the nicest city in the world.

Rainy days are good / bad for studying.

The food in the cafeteria is too expensive / cheap.

Sugar is good / bad for our health.

Pizza is healthy / unhealthy.

Our teacher should give more / fewer tests.

Everyone needs / doesn't need a cell phone.

The public transportation in this city is excellent / terrible.

English is easier / harder than (my native language).

Swimming is good / bad exercise.

Children should / shouldn't learn to cook in school.

Music is good / bad for our health.

Professional athletes earn too much / not enough money.

Facebook is / isn't a waste of time.

Women / men are better leaders than men / women.

There are too many / not enough policemen/women in this city.

Marriage is an outdated institution.

Alcohol is good / bad for our health.

Mass tourism is good / bad for poor countries.

Diana Funtana ESL Productions / Practice Statements

Gambling is / isn't dangerous.

Cigarettes are too expensive / too cheap.

This city has the best / the worst nightclubs.

Museums are interesting / boring.

Everyone needs / doesn't need a computer / cell phone.

Women should / shouldn't join the army.

Mothers should / shouldn't work.

Sports should / shouldn't be taught at school.

School books should / shouldn't be free.

Cell phones should / shouldn't be banned in the classroom.

More people should take the bus / drive to work.

Young people should / shouldn't live together before they get married.

Every child should learn to play a musical instrument.

People should be allowed to smoke in public places.

English should be taught as a second language in all countries.

Cell phone use in cars should be made illegal.

Poor and homeless people should / shouldn't be allowed to beg on the street.

Public transportation should / shouldn't be free.

This school / university needs / doesn't need better computer facilities.

The work week should / shouldn't be reduced to 4 days.

With a partner decide whether the following arguments:

- Support the resolution (S)
- Rebut the resolution (R)
- Are irrelevant or invalid (X)

Justify your decision.

Resolution 1: Solar power is a viable alternative to fossil fuels.

_____ Every day, 173,000 tetra watts of energy strike the earth in the form of sunlight.

_____ Solar power releases zero emissions, or no or very few polluting chemical or gases into the environment.

_____ Prices for solar technology have been falling steadily since the 1970s.

Resolution 2: Mass tourism contributes significantly to the development of poor countries.

_____ For small Caribbean and Pacific islands, tourism can account for as much as 40 percent of GDP.

_____ Tourism turns tribal ceremonies into side-shows and relics into souvenirs.

_____ For 2020, the World Tourism Organization estimates 1.56 billion international arrivals and an annual growth rate of 4 percent a year.

Resolution 3: Money cannot buy you happiness.

_____ According to the 2012 Happy Planet Index, the top five ranking countries are Costa Rica, Vietnam, Colombia, Belize, and El Salvador.

_____ Money, in large amounts, has the power to buy things that one desires, especially luxurious ones, and fulfill one's aspirations, leading to immediate happiness.

_____ Poor countries have a minimal ecological footprint between 1.4 and 2.4.

Resolution 4: Genetically modified organisms can help feed the planet.

_____ The United Nations predicts that, in 1050, there will be 9.2 to 10.5 billion mouths to feed.

_____ GMO crops mature earlier, contain more nutrients, resist pesticides and herbicides and produce higher yields.

_____ GMO terminator crops have been engineered for male sterility so that they cannot produce seed.

Resolution 5: Women are smarter than men.

_____ Men predominantly use the logical, rational left side of the brain, which makes them more skilled at mathematics and problem-solving.

_____ Women use both hemispheres of the brain to process information, and they are able to multitask.

_____ Women have 2 X chromosomes whereas men have only 1.

Resolution 6: Cars are a major threat to the environment.

_____ Between 1950 and 2010, the number of register vehicles per household in the USA increased by 551%.

_____ For every gallon of as burned in an automobile engine, 20 pounds of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere.

_____ The use of catalytic converters, along with fuel injection has reduced the amount of harmful exhaust emissions out the tailpipe by over 95% compared to the 1960's.

Resolution 7: DNA evidence should be collected on all persons who have been arrested or charged, regardless of their guilt or innocence.

_____ DNA information is private and if it is released to employers or insurance companies it can lead to unfair discrimination.

_____ A few months after the National DNA Index System was established, 300 previously unsolved violent crimes were cleared up.

_____ In the controversial 1994 double-murder case against O.J. Simpson, the mishandling and possible contamination of DNA evidence led to his acquittal.

Resolution 8: Cities offer a wide range of housing and services that cannot be found in the country.

_____ In major cities, such as London, an apartment of 120 square meters costs up to \$24,250 per square meter, making it unaffordable for most people.

_____ In 2000, 47% of the world's population were living in urban areas.

_____ Cities provide a developed infrastructure, public transportation, employment opportunities, better health care, and education.

Resolution 9: Cities consume huge amounts of energy and leave a massive ecological footprint.

_____ Canada's largest city, Toronto, covers 240 square miles and requires 200 times the area to meet its resource requirements and absorb its waste.

_____ Between 1664 and 1666, poorly managed water led for the second time in history to the spread of the bubonic plague in London and the death of one in every five citizens.

_____ The city of Curitiba has a recycling rate of 70%, the highest in the world.

Resolution 10: Governments should ban stem cell research

_____ When Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first heart transplant in 1967, it was regarded as a miracle.

_____ It will take researchers years to learn how stem cells really work before they can produce viable medical cures.

_____ Stem cells know exactly where to go when they are needed in the body and ca live forever if frozen.

Elementary debate topics

Which is better:

1. coffee or tea
2. cats or dogs
3. a meat or a vegetarian diet
4. oranges or apples
5. winter or summer
6. Apple or Microsoft
7. e-books or paper books
8. living in a city or living in the country
9. classical music or rock music
10. French or German as a second language
11. basketball or soccer
12. a holiday on the beach or in a famous city
13. living in an apartment or a house
14. renting a house / condo or owning a house / condo
15. riding a bike or taking the bus
16. being single or married
17. cooking or eating out
18. electric cars or gasoline engine cars
19. public or private schools
20. trade school or university

Intermediate debate topics

1. The economy is more important than the environment.
2. In a marriage love is more important than money.
3. It is better to work for a company than to start your own business.
4. A young person will have a better future if he/she studies at a university than if he goes to a vocational/technical school.
5. Women are smarter than men.
6. Credit cards are more useful than cash.
7. It is better to marry someone from your own culture and religion.
8. Video games are harmful to children.
9. People should have the right to carry arms and own guns.
10. Mass tourism is harmful to the community.
11. Women should serve in the military just like men.
12. The hunting of wild animals should be banned.
13. It is more important to have a career than a family.
14. Too much exercise is bad for your health.
15. Junk food should be banned from public schools and educational institutions.
16. Children should have to wear school uniforms.
17. Medical insurance should be free.
18. The legal voting age should be lowered to 16.
19. Students can learn more from a computer than from a teacher.
20. People should have to give up their driver's license when they are 70.

Advanced debate topics

1. Convicted mass murderers, serial killers and rapists should be put to death.
2. People who are terminally ill should have the right to seek assistance in committing suicide.
3. The use of torture is an acceptable form of interrogation.
4. The personal use of marijuana and other soft drugs should be legalized.
5. Technology is making people stupid, dependent and anti-social.
6. Genetically modified organisms are a positive development in agriculture.
7. Catholic priests should be allowed to marry.
8. Organized religion is a form of slavery.
9. Cloning and stem cell research should not be regulated by the government.
10. Marriage is an out-dated institution.
11. Globalization is harmful to the economy.
12. Married couples should be restricted to having only two children.
13. Capitalism is the worst possible economic system.
14. Science should make it possible for all human being to live past 100.
15. Money is the root of all evil.
16. The DNA of every citizen should be entered into a national registry.
17. Capital punishment prevents murder.
18. School should teach sex education.
19. Gay couples should be able to marry.
20. War is a crime.

Diana Funtana ESL Productions / Debate Rubric

Team Names _____

Date _____

Debate Topic _____

Assign a score of 1-5 for each speaker (1, 2, 3) according to the following criteria. For Arguments, Rebuttal and Language calculate the team average and enter under T in the gray columns.

Criteria	Affirmative Team							
	Speakers 1	2	3	Team	Speakers 1	2	3	Team
1. Arguments								
• Argument was strong, clear and logical								
• Supported argument with convincing and relevant examples, facts and reasons								
• Provided accurate and credible information								
• Demonstrated critical thinking								
2. Rebuttal								
• Provided a strong, logical and relevant counter argument								
• Demonstrated critical thinking								
3. Language								
• Spoke loudly, clearly and with conviction								
• Addressed opponent and did not read excessively from notes								
• Was polite and respectful, didn't speak out of turn or interrupt, and used formal language								
4. Teamwork								
• Introduced, reaffirmed and concluded positions								
• Spoke within time limit								
• Were cohesive, well-organized and prepared								
• Participated equally								
Total Score / 65								

In your groups discuss the following questions. (Do not write down the answers.)

1. Did you enjoy this activity? Why or why not?
2. What did you like most / least about the activity?
3. What did you learn from the activity?
4. How did the activity improve your speaking ability?
5. How well did you work together as a group?
6. What do you need to improve as an individual? As a group?
7. What things can help improve your performance for the next speaking activity:
 - More time for practice
 - Additional props and equipment
 - Better or more instructions
 - Other