

Debating-related games, Balloon Debates and Alley Debates

Debating Related Games

There are a number of debating related games that can be used in class or at debating society meetings.

Although, debating related games are fun they are a very useful way of introducing the concept of debating to young people. For example, the game 'I Couldn't Disagree More' is a good way of introducing rebuttal to young pupils. The Point of Information Game is, as the name suggests, a great introduction to Points of Information.

Furthermore, debating games are an excellent way of introducing debating to pupils who may find it difficult, and can be a starting point for getting younger pupils more involved.

Debating games include:

- If I Ruled The World
- I Couldn't Disagree More
- The Point Of Information Game
- Balloon Debates
- Alley Debates
- Complete The Sentence
- Just a Minute

If I ruled The World

Learning Objectives:

- To help improve general communication skills
- To help improve confidence
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage listening skills
- To improve memory skills

Activity

'If I ruled the world' is a quick game and a useful starting point. Form a circle and explain the game. This is a good game to use at the first meeting of a debating society, as it helps people learn each others' names, while the skills taught in the game are helpful for good debate.

The first person in the circle announces their name and has to make a statement about what they would do if they ruled the world. For example:

Person A - 'My name's Bob and if I ruled the world, I would give everyone cake.'

The second person then has to say:

Person B – 'His name's Bob and if he ruled the world he would give everyone cake. My name is Amy and if I ruled the world I would eliminate world poverty.'

The third person then has to say:

Person B – 'His name's Bob and if he ruled the world he would give everyone cake. Her name is Amy and if she ruled the world she would eliminate world poverty. My name's Omar and if I ruled the world I would make everyone wear blue hats'.

This continues round the circle. If the circle is large, you can start the game again half-way round the circle so not to put too much pressure on the pupils at the far end of the circle.

I Couldn't Disagree More

Learning Objectives:

- To help improve general communication skills
- To help improve confidence
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage listening skills
- To encourage & improve rebuttal skills

Activity

'I Couldn't Disagree More' is a useful and quick game that can help students practice rebuttal techniques and helps develop the ability to deal with points of information.

One pupil makes a statement (this statement could be serious, silly, topical, controversial or obvious). The next person has to reply to the statement by saying 'I couldn't disagree more' and then give a reason why.

Here's an example:

Pupil A – "I believe that politics is a waste of time"

Pupil B – "I couldn't disagree more. Politics is incredibly important as politicians make decisions that affect every aspect of our lives"

Now it is Pupil B's turn to make a statement:

Pupil B – "I believe that we should introduce road pricing in the UK"

Pupil C – "I couldn't disagree more. In early 2007, over 1.8m people in the UK signed a petition saying that they didn't want it."

As a classroom activity, this game can be modified so statements have to be about a certain topic area for example '*The Environment*'.

The Point Of Information Game

Learning Objectives:

- To encourage pupils to question a point of view
- To help improve general communication skills
- To help pupils handle objections
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage & improve rebuttal skills
- To encourage listening skills

Activity

'The Point of Information Game' is devilishly simple but very effective. To begin with, the teacher should explain the game to the class.

The activity is – that the speaker (the first time the speaker will be the teacher) will speak on a controversial topic. The speaker has to defend the controversial topic by giving reasons and examples and the rest of the class have to offer points of information. They do this by standing up and saying 'Point of Information'. The speaker either accepts the Point of Information by pointing at the person and saying 'Yes' or declines the point by saying 'No thank you'.

If the speaker says 'Yes' the questioner must offer a point of information. When the point has been given, the speaker must answer that point of information whilst continuing their speech. A time limit should be set and that should be between 1 and 2 minutes.

After the teacher has shown the class how the game is played they can ask for volunteers to be the speaker.

An example of a good controversial topic to start with is **'I believe that children should be seen and not heard'**.

This game encourages pupils to question points of view but also offers an outlet to pupils who may find debating or public speaking difficult as they can be involved in the game by offering short points of information. This is a good way to start pupils speaking in public and to help them build confidence.

Balloon Debate

Learning Objectives:

- To encourage pupils to question a point of view
- To help improve general communication skills
- To help pupils handle objections
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage rebuttal skills
- To encourage listening skills

Balloon debates are a fun way to introduce debating to a class or to a debating society and can be used as a platform for a wider discussion in class.

Activity

Pick five or six people each of whom chooses a historical or famous person to impersonate. Alternatively, the teacher can allocate the speaker a historical or famous person.

Ask them all to imagine that they are together in a hot air balloon that is rapidly falling.

One person must be thrown overboard in order to save the others, but who will it be?

Each participant must make a speech saying why they should be allowed to stay in the balloon. The rest of the class votes, and the loser is disqualified from the rest of the debate. This continues, until only one pupil is left in the balloon.

Wider Class Discussion & Participation

The other pupils will need to listen carefully to the arguments so that they can vote on who gets thrown out of the balloon!

Ask the class why they made the decision they came to. A discussion can take place about whether they voted someone off because of the arguments the speaker made or because of preconceived ideas.

Possible Famous People

The President of the USA
The Pope
The Prime Minister of the UK
A Famous Pop Star
A Reality TV Star
A Footballer
A Doctor
A Teacher

Teachers can think up their own examples or ask the pupils to suggest people!

Alley Debates

Learning Objectives:

- To help improve general communication skills
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage rebuttal skills
- To encourage listening skills

Alley Debates are a fun and quick way to introduce debating to a class or to a debating society. They emphasise quick thinking and rebuttal skills.

Activity

Divide the class into two groups and form two lines a few yards apart facing each other. Set a motion for the Alley Debate – these can be fun or serious.

An Alley Debate should be an 'either/or' motion along the lines of '**Should I buy Fair Trade goods?**' or '**Should Scotland Become An Independent Country?**'. Assign one side of the topic to one line and the other side of the topic to the other line.

The teacher then stands halfway between the two lines. They should turn to the first speaker who is in favour of the motion and ask for a reason why they should buy fair trade goods. If the point is convincing the teacher should take a step towards that side. If the teacher is not convinced, stay in the middle.

Then ask the first speaker in the other line why you should not buy fair trade goods and repeat the process. The teacher should work their way down the lines until they reach the final speaker.

Possible Alley Debate Topics

Should I buy fair trade goods or not?

Should Scotland become an independent country?

Should Britain scrap its nuclear weapons programme?

Should people become vegetarian?

Should we stop taking flights to help save the environment?

Teachers can think up their own topics, or encourage pupils to think up their own! The topics can be quite simplistic for younger or inexperienced pupils or can be quite advanced for older or experienced pupils.

Complete The Sentence

Learning Objectives

- To help improve general communication skills
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage critical thinking skills
- To encourage rebuttal skills
- To encourage listening skills
- To encourage an expression of views and debate on issues and current affairs

Activity

This activity involves promoting discussion about major issues. To start, the teacher should write a number of statements on a blackboard/flip chart (leaving some room between each statements).

Example Statements

- The best way to fight global warming is...
- People commit crimes because...
- Giving aid to developing countries because...
- Young people feel powerless because...
- People come to the UK to settle because...
- People leave the UK to settle overseas because...
- The best way to alleviate poverty is...
- Freedom of speech is important but...

Following this, the teacher should read a statement and ask the class to fill in the remainder of the sentence. Pupils should contribute ideas and the teacher should note the ideas.

Once one pupil has offered an idea, ask if any other pupils have a view on the matter.

This can be used as a brief game at the start of a class or society meeting to get pupils thinking about major issues or can be used to stimulate discussion about current affairs.

It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers: encouraging pupils to express an opinion and encouraging discussion is the most important thing.

The above are just example. Teachers can use their own examples or ask the pupils to come up with their own statements.

Just a minute

Learning Objectives

- To help improve general communication skills
- To encourage quick thinking skills
- To encourage memory skills
- To improve vocabulary and word usage
- To encourage listening skills
- To encourage peer assessment

Resources

- Stopwatch or timing device
- A bell

Activity

Decide a topic that pupils can speak on without needing to prepare for. This topic can either be set by the teacher or through discussion with the class.

When a topic has been decided, the teacher should ask for volunteers to speak. Explain that the minute begins as soon as the first speaker starts.

If the first speaker hesitates, repeats words or talks about something unrelated to the topic they can be challenged by one of the other pupils. To challenge, they should raise their hand and the speaker must stop as will the stopwatch.

The pupil who has raised their hand will be asked to explain their objection. If the challenge is agreed they then will take over from the speaker (or can nominate another speaker) and the stopwatch will start again. The student speaking when one minute is reached the winner!