

## B1 TEENS

# The Great Debate

Building arguments, giving opinions and using linking words

B1 Intermediate | Speaking | Reading | 40 min

## ★ Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Read a text about how debates work and why they matter
- ✓ Learn vocabulary for arguing, persuading and expressing opinions
- ✓ Use linking words and phrases to structure arguments
- ✓ Express agreement, partial agreement and disagreement politely
- ✓ Build and present a structured argument with reasons and examples
- ✓ Write an opinion paragraph with clear linking and structure

## 1 Before You Read

- ▶ Have you ever had an argument where you changed your mind?
- ▶ What is the difference between a debate and a fight?
- ▶ Is it more important to win an argument or to understand the other person?

## 2 Reading: How to Win (and Lose) an Argument

### How to Win (and Lose) an Argument

Every school has them. The student who always raises their hand to disagree with the teacher. The friend who can convince anyone of anything. The classmate who never backs down, even when they are clearly wrong. Arguments are everywhere -- at home, at school, online, and in politics. But what makes some people better at debating than others? And more importantly, can you learn to argue well?

The answer is yes -- and the first step is understanding the difference between arguing to win and arguing to learn. "In my opinion, the biggest mistake young debaters make is thinking that a debate is a competition," says Dr. Anya Petrov, who teaches debate skills at secondary schools across Europe. "On the one hand, you want to persuade the audience. But on the other hand, you also need to listen carefully to the other side. The best debaters are not the loudest -- they are the ones who respond to what their

opponent actually says, rather than just repeating their own point."

So what does a good argument look like? Firstly, it has a clear position. You need to state your opinion at the beginning, for example: "I believe that school uniforms should be abolished." Secondly, you need to support your opinion with reasons and evidence. However, a reason alone is not enough -- you also need examples. For instance, instead of just saying "uniforms limit self-expression," a stronger argument would be: "Uniforms limit self-expression. For example, in countries where uniforms are not required, studies show that students feel more confident and creative in class."

Furthermore, a good debater knows how to deal with the other side's arguments. This is called a counter-argument. Instead of ignoring what your opponent says, you should acknowledge their point and then explain why you still disagree. For example: "Although some people argue that uniforms create equality, I believe this is not true because real equality comes from how we treat each other, not from what we wear."

Finally, the language you use matters just as much as the content. Phrases like "I strongly believe," "In addition to this," and "On the other hand" make your argument sound more structured and convincing. Moreover, being polite when you disagree -- "I see your point, however..." -- is far more effective than simply saying "You're wrong." As Dr. Petrov puts it: "The goal of a debate is not to destroy your opponent. It's to make the audience think."

### 3 Vocabulary

| Word                    | Definition                     | Example                           |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>debate</b>           | formal discussion for/against  | "Debate about uniforms."          |
| <b>argument</b>         | reasons to support an idea     | "Clear and convincing argument."  |
| <b>persuade</b>         | convince someone               | "Persuaded me to change my mind." |
| <b>counter-argument</b> | response to an argument        | "Strong counter-argument."        |
| <b>opponent</b>         | person you argue against       | "Listen to your opponent."        |
| <b>acknowledge</b>      | accept something is true       | "Acknowledge the other side."     |
| <b>abolish</b>          | officially end something       | "Abolish homework."               |
| <b>self-expression</b>  | expressing your personality    | "Clothes are self-expression."    |
| <b>equality</b>         | equal rights and opportunities | "Uniforms create equality."       |
| <b>convincing</b>       | making someone believe         | "Very convincing speech."         |
| <b>structured</b>       | organised logically            | "Structured argument."            |
| <b>position</b>         | your opinion on a topic        | "State your position clearly."    |
| <b>evidence</b>         | facts supporting a claim       | "Support with evidence."          |
| <b>audience</b>         | people watching/listening      | "Make the audience think."        |

| Word             | Definition                  | Example                         |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>back down</b> | stop arguing, accept defeat | "He never backs down."          |
| <b>effective</b> | producing desired result    | "Politeness is more effective." |

Collocations: make a point • support an argument • give evidence • state your position • counter-argument • back down from • in my opinion • on the other hand

## 4 Grammar: Linking Words for Opinion and Argument

**Giving opinion:** "In my opinion, the biggest mistake is thinking a debate is a competition."

**Contrasting:** "On the one hand, you want to persuade. On the other hand, you need to listen."

**Adding reasons:** "Furthermore, a good debater knows how to deal with counter-arguments."

**Concession:** "Although some argue uniforms create equality, I believe this is not true."

| Function    | Linking Words                            | Example                                 |
|-------------|--|---|
| Opinion     | In my opinion, I believe, Personally     | I believe homework is important.        |
| Listing     | Firstly, Secondly, Furthermore, Moreover | Firstly, it saves time.                 |
| Examples    | For example, For instance, Such as       | For example, Sweden has no uniforms.    |
| Contrast    | However, Although, On the other hand     | However, not everyone agrees.           |
| Agreeing    | I agree, That's a good point             | I agree that exercise is important.     |
| Partially   | I see your point but, To some extent     | I see your point, but...                |
| Disagreeing | I disagree because, I'm not sure         | I disagree because there's no evidence. |
| Concluding  | In conclusion, To sum up, Overall        | In conclusion, debates are valuable.    |

### ⚠ Common Mistakes

~~In my opinion, I think uniforms are bad.~~ → **In my opinion, uniforms are bad.** (don't double up)

~~I am agree with you.~~ → I agree with you. (agree is a verb)

~~Although ugly, but they create equality.~~ → Although ugly, they create equality. (no although+but)

## 5 Match the Halves

| #  | Beginning                           | Ending   |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1  | In my opinion, social media         | does more harm than good.                      |
| 2  | Firstly, it wastes time.            | Secondly, it creates unrealistic expectations. |
| 3  | However, some people argue          | that it helps people stay connected.           |
| 4  | Although social media has benefits, | the negative effects are stronger.             |
| 5  | For example, studies show that      | teenagers who use it less sleep better.        |
| 6  | I see your point, but               | the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.     |
| 7  | Furthermore, cyberbullying          | has become a serious problem.                  |
| 8  | On the one hand, it's useful.       | On the other hand, it's addictive.             |
| 9  | I strongly believe schools          | should teach responsible use.                  |
| 10 | In conclusion, social media         | needs careful limits.                          |

## 6 Comprehension Quiz

**1. Dr. Petrov says the biggest mistake is...**

Answer: Thinking a debate is a competition

**2. What is a counter-argument?**

Answer: An argument in response to another

**3. Best debaters are those who...**

Answer: Respond to what their opponent says

**4. Goal of a debate according to Petrov?**

Answer: To make the audience think

**5. Which introduces a CONTRASTING idea?**

Answer: However

**6. Best way to disagree politely?**

Answer: I see your point, however I think...

**7. 'Although ugly, but they create equality.' Error?**

Answer: Don't use although + but together

**8. Which is WRONG?**

Answer: I am agree with you completely.

## 7 Fill in the Blanks

**Word Bank:** In my opinion • However • Furthermore • Although • For example • In conclusion  
• I see your point but • Firstly

1. \_\_\_\_\_, homework should be optional.

2. \_\_\_\_\_, it helps students practise.

3. \_\_\_\_\_, too much homework causes stress.

4. \_\_\_\_\_, students in Finland do little homework but achieve well.

5. \_\_\_\_\_, homework reduces time for hobbies.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ some homework is useful, too much is counterproductive.

7. \_\_\_\_\_, I still think some homework develops discipline.

8. \_\_\_\_\_, schools should find a balance.

Answers: 1. In my opinion • 2. Firstly • 3. However • 4. For example • 5. Furthermore • 6. Although • 7. I see your point but • 8. In conclusion

## 8 Speaking & Writing

### ◆ Discussion Questions

Should schools abolish homework? Argue for AND against.

Is social media good or bad for teenagers?

'Exams are the best way to test knowledge.' Agree or disagree?

Should the voting age be lowered to 16?

Choose any topic and debate with your partner for 2 minutes.

### ◆ Example Dialogue

A: I strongly believe uniforms should be abolished. Firstly, they limit self-expression.

B: I see your point, but uniforms create equality. For example, students look the same.

A: Although true, real equality comes from how we treat people. Furthermore, countries without uniforms still have respect.

B: However, without uniforms, some students might feel pressure to wear expensive brands.

A: Good point. Nevertheless, personal choice is more important.

B: In conclusion, both sides have valid arguments!

### Writing Task

Write 80-120 words FOR or AGAINST one topic. Use at least 5 linking words:

Option A: "Schools should replace exams with project-based assessment."

Option B: "Teenagers should use social media without any restrictions."

## 9 Debate Master – The Game

Interactive game available online. 10 argument analysis questions testing debate skills!

| #  | Question   | Best Answer                                    |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | 'Homework is stupid, teachers are lazy.' Problem?      | It's an insult, not an argument                |
| 2  | Best way to start an argument?                         | In my opinion, there are several reasons...    |
| 3  | Opinion + Furthermore + Moreover. What's missing?      | Evidence and examples                          |
| 4  | 'Although useful, but takes time.' Error?              | Don't use although + but together              |
| 5  | Opponent says social media helps connection. Response? | I see your point, however research shows...    |
| 6  | Counter-argument to 'school should start later'?       | Later starts = less after-school time          |
| 7  | 'In my opinion, I think exams are unfair.' Problem?    | Redundant -- use one opinion marker            |
| 8  | Which gives strongest EVIDENCE?                        | A 2023 study found that...                     |
| 9  | 'I am agree with you.' Error?                          | agree is a verb: I agree with you              |
| 10 | Best way to end a debate?                              | In conclusion, both sides have valid points... |

## 10 Review Checklist

- ✓ I can understand a text about debate techniques
- ✓ I can use vocabulary for arguing and persuading
- ✓ I can use linking words to structure arguments

- ✓ I can agree, partially agree and disagree politely
- ✓ I can build a structured argument with reasons and examples
- ✓ I can write an opinion paragraph with clear linking

## **Congratulations!**

You have completed this lesson: The Great Debate