beginner DEBATE KIT:

Helping Students Speak Truth with Clarity and Confidence

how to use this DEBATE KIT

Welcome!

This debate kit is designed to guide homeschoolers or more independent learners through the basics of debate in a fun, accessible, and educational way. This kit is a stepping stone to formal debate, like Lincoln-Douglas and Policy that are found more on the high school level.

You can use this kit:

- In a co-op or family setting
- With 1-on-1 debates between siblings, friends, or parent-child
- Across multiple ages (best for ages 10–14)
- Alongside your language arts, logic, or social studies curriculum

Steps

- 1. Read the **Debate Format Guide**.
- 2. Introduce words from the **Vocabulary Cheat Sheet.** Try to use these words as you go through the activities.
- 3. Go through the Microlessons and the exercises.

 These activities help shape the skills students should incorporate as they begin to debate more regularly.
- 4. Use and choose **Topics** from the list to debate.
- 5. Use the **Planning Worksheets** to prepare your arguments.
- 6. Conduct a debate using the **Flow sheet** to help you!
- 7. Use the **Ballot** to offer feedback.
- 8. Reflect on what was learned and award the **Certificate!**

DEBATE FORMAT a guide for beginners



Cross examination (up to 3 minutes): Negative gets the opportunity to ask the Affirmative any questions he/she has about the Aff position and case. These questions can be used to clarify points and/or show weaknesses in the opponent's arguments.

Negative constructive (up to 5 minutes): Negative gets a turn to speak. He/she shares their case, states his/her claim, and gives 2 -3 reasons for their positions, with evidence. The reasons can argue specifically for the negative position, and/or directly go against a reason given by the Aff.

Cross examination (up to 3 minutes): Affirmative now gets the opportunity to ask the Negative any questions he/she has about the Neg position and case. These questions can be used to clarify points and/or show weaknesses in the opponent's arguments.

Affirmative rebuttal (up to 3 minutes): Affirmative now gets the opportunity to give his/her rebuttal. Affirmative should respond to Neg's points respectfully, using both logical and emotional reasons and sum up the strongest arguments they have.

Negative rebuttal (up to 4 minutes): Negative now gets the opportunity to give his/her rebuttal and closing statement combined. (This is because affirmative, in formal debate, gets to begin and end the debate round.) Negative can respond to Aff's points respectfully, using both logical and emotional reasons and sum up the strongest arguments they have. This rebuttal should end with a final closing statement as to why the negative should win.

Affirmative closing statement (up to 1 minute): Affirmative gets the opportunity to have the final word of the debate. He/she should take this last minute to end the round with a final closing statement as to why the Aff should should win.

MICRO-LESSONS: gathering skills for success

I find ...

that students approach speaking in from of others—and debate especially— with a whole range of emotions! Some get exciting about arguing ideas; others feel intimidated! (A totally natural response, by the way!)

No matter which end of the spectrum your students find themselves, learning certain skills can help them find confidence if they need it and only improve their communication if they are already motivated to dive in!

In this section of the kit, you will find 5 micro-lessons to help your student gain clarity and confidence as they take their communication to the next step!

Lessons

Attention Grabbing Devises

What they are, why we need them, and how to use them

Defining your Terms

Why knowing what words mean matters and choosing the rights ones for you

Finding our Values

What they are, why we need them, and how to choosing one

Connecting our points

What transitions are, why we need them, and how to use them

Argument strength and order

Why we order them, how to order them, and how to recognize strong ones

Ending with impacts!

How to end speeches clearly and confidently and why restatements and call to actions work!

These micro-lessons are a fantastic way to grow and stretch skills, but feel free to take the lessons slowly for younger learners or pick + choose a few to focus on!

GRAB ATTENTION from the very beginning!

What is an Attention Grabbing Device?



An Attention-grabbing device is the very first thing you say in your speech to hook the listener! (You can put them throughout your speech, too!)

Attention-grabbing devices help us keep and get the audience's attention! We want to be interesting to listen to, not boring!



Why do we need Attention Grabbing Devices?

What are some examples of Attention-Grabbing Devices?



Surprising facts: "Did you know 90% of kids say they want more one-on-one time with their parents?"

Short stories: "Last week, my little brother spilled his cereal. The milk dripped off the table and all over the floor—and it made me think about rules."

Thought-provoking questions: "Have you ever wished you could go back in time and change something you've done?"

GRAB ATTENTION finding devices skill sheet

Write one surprising fact you could use in a debate.		
		Write a short story (2-3 sentences) that can relate to a debate topic.
Write a fun or thought-provoking question.		
Check the one yo	ou thi	nk would be best to

include in an upcoming speech!

DEFINE YOUR TERMS what your words mean matters

Why are defining terms so important?



In a debate, both sides need to agree on what the key words in the topic mean. This keeps things fair and avoids confusion. Defining terms helps everyone understand your argument clearly.

They set the rules for the discussion.



They make your position easier to understand.



They prevent misunderstandings or sneaky tricks.



What do good definitions do?

Here's an example!





Words that are important

- Kids: children under 16 years of age
- **Chores**: tasks like cleaning, feeding pets, or doing laundry
- Paid: money given for doing work regularly

Now your argument has important words ready to go!

FIND YOUR WORDS

defining terms skill sheet

Choose a debate topic to work with. Get one from your teacher/parent or choose one from the Topic List.

Write the debate topic here. Then circle the most important words in the sentence. Choose two		
or three.	#1	Word:
		Definition:
Vrite a short definition for ach word. Look them up if	# 2	Word: Definition:
you don't know or if you want to sound more		
professional.	#2	Word:
	#3	Definition:

Read your definitions aloud.

Are they easy to understand?

Would your opponent agree

with them?

DEBATE TIP:

If you use a definition from a dictionary or an expert, make sure you tell us where you go the information.

Make your speeches VALUABLE.

What is a "value" in debate?

A value is the big idea or principle behind your argument. It's what you believe matters most.

For example:

If you argue for longer outdoor time, your value might be "health."

If you're against too many chores, your value might be "freedom."

Values help judges understand why your side is important—not just what you want, but why it matters!



Why are values in our arguments important?

What are some common values that you can use for your arguments?



Fairness
Justice
Freedom
Responsibility
Safety
Honesty
Kindness
Respect

Education
Community
Tradition
Creativity
Family
Courage
Health
Peace

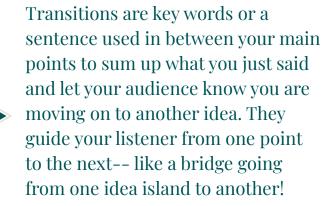
WHAT DO YOU VALUE? value connection skill sheet

Choose a debate topic and write it here. What is your side?	Topic: Check your side:	Affirmative Negative
	What are two values that consupport you	ean help
Which one of those values do you think can support your side the best? Why?		

BUILD A BRIDGE:

connecting your ideas with transitions

What are transitions?



Some useful transitions are:

- "My first reason is..."
- "Next, I want to share..."

Now that we have seen _____, let's look at..."

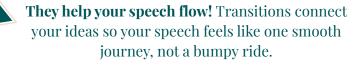
- "Another reason to support my side is..."
- "Finally, let's consider..."
- "In conclusion..."

What do transitions sounds like?

How do good transitions help during your speech or debate?











They boost memory!

When ideas are linked clearly, your audience is more likely to remember your strongest points.

They help you be persuasive! A well-structured speech is more convincing and easier to understand.

BRIDGE BUILDING transitions skill sheet

transition into 1st point Choose a topic/side. Write 3 short points/arguments that support your position. transition from 1 to 2 transition from 2 to 3 Using the suggestions from the micro-lesson, write transitions in the

boxes between the

point/arguments.

GOOD. BETTER. BEST. shaping your speech for strength

While there are a few good ways to order arguments, typically the best way is from weakest to strongest.

For example, you are trying to convince your parents to go camping. You argue that...

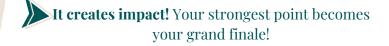
- 1) it is fun
- 2) it teaches real-life skills
- 3) it would bring your family closer together.

For your parents, that would probably be the most convincing order. Why? If not, would rearranging them be more convincing?

How should we organize our arguments?

Why does weakest to strongest work?









It helps with nerves! Starting with easier points help builds confidence! **It shows strategy!** Judges notice when your structure makes sense... and logical organization is persuasive!

Pro tip: Make sure that you leave enough time at the tail-end of your speech to make that last point, especially since it is the most important!

BUILD A CAREER-STRONG CASE! argument strength skill sheet

TOPIC: Should kids (ages 12-14) be allowed to have part-time jobs (like babysitting, dog-walking, or tutoring younger kids)?

Imagine you are on the Affirmative side. (You agree students should have jobs.) Come up with 3 reasons to support your position.	
Rank your reasons weakest to strongest, from 1-3. The strongest should be 3.	

Go back and read your arguments out-loud, using your new ranking. Does your final point feel powerful?

BONUS:

What would make your strongest reason even better? Adding an example or fact!

STICK THE LANDING ending your speech with power

Your closing statement is your chance to shine. Be clear, confident, and powerful!

How do you end your speech well?

(Pretend the examples here are from a debate you gave, arguing that kids should get paid for doing chores.)

today!")







Use a final thought or story! Choose something that connects your position to what the audience would agree with. "Hard work deserves reward—even when you're young." Here you are assuming that most people believe work should be rewarded, no matter how old you are! You could replace this with a story that would also prove your point!

Now practice reading the parts altogether! Do your best to sound confident and persuasive!

"Getting paid for chores teaches consistency, money management, and real-world responsibility, which is why I believe and arge that kid should get paid for them. Hard work deserves reward-- even when you are young! So let's be fair! Let's start paying kids today!"

YOUR GRAND FINALE confident conclusion skill sheet

TOPIC: Should kids be allowed to choose their own hairstyles without parent approval? Which one do you agree with most?



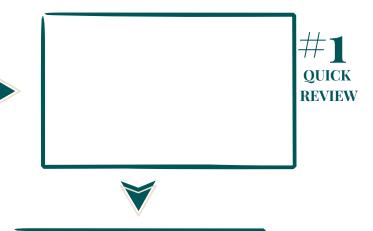
1) Choosing hairstyles encourage selfexpression, 2) teaches decisionmaking, and 3) shows trust in the child!



Parental approval 1) provides guidance about appropriateness, 2) can help avoid regret or damage to the hair, and 3) can help avoid regret or damage to a child's esteem

Choosing the side you agree with the most, use the points listed to begin your confident conclusion!

Continue to do the next steps with your own ideas!



Feel free to use the back of the page or a



#3
CALL TO ACTION

RESTATE POSITION

Feel free to use the back of the page or a separate sheet of paper if you need more room!

SAMPLE TOPICS to get you started



Moral & Ethical

- Is it ever okay to lie?
- Should you always obey rules?
- Is it wrong to keep something that doesn't belong to you? Should everyone be treated exactly the same?
- Is it okay to hurt someone's feelings if you're telling the truth?
- Should you help others even if it's hard for you?
- Is it fair to punish a whole group for one person's mistake?
- Should you keep a secret if it might hurt someone?
- Is it okay to quit something you promised to finish?
- Should people be judged by their actions or their intentions?



Literature-based

- Was Edmund right to go with the White Witch? (Narnia)
- Should Harry have trusted Dumbledore? (Harry Potter)
- Should Matilda have used her powers to get revenge on Miss Trunchbull? (Matilda)
- Was Charlotte right to sacrifice herself to save Wilbur? (Charlotte's Web)
- Was it fair for the Giver to choose Jonas? (The Giver)



Practical

- Should kids get paid for chores?
- Should pets be allowed in every home?
- Should children choose their own bedtime?
- Should kids have to share their belongings with siblings?
- Should parents be allowed to post pictures of their children online?



Silly + Absurd

- Should dragons be allowed in libraries?
- Is cereal a soup?
- Should animals be required to wear clothes?
- Is a hot dog a sandwich?
- Should vegetables be banned from birthday parties?

DEBATE PLANNER organize + prepare to win!

DEBATE TOPIC:	•		+
AFFI	IRMATIVE		NEGATIVE
Daggara III	What is your first supporting argument?	EVIDE	What is your main claim? State your position clearly and confidently. ENCE + SUPPORT
1	What is your second supporting argument?	EVIDE	ENCE + SUPPORT

DEBATE PLANNER continued

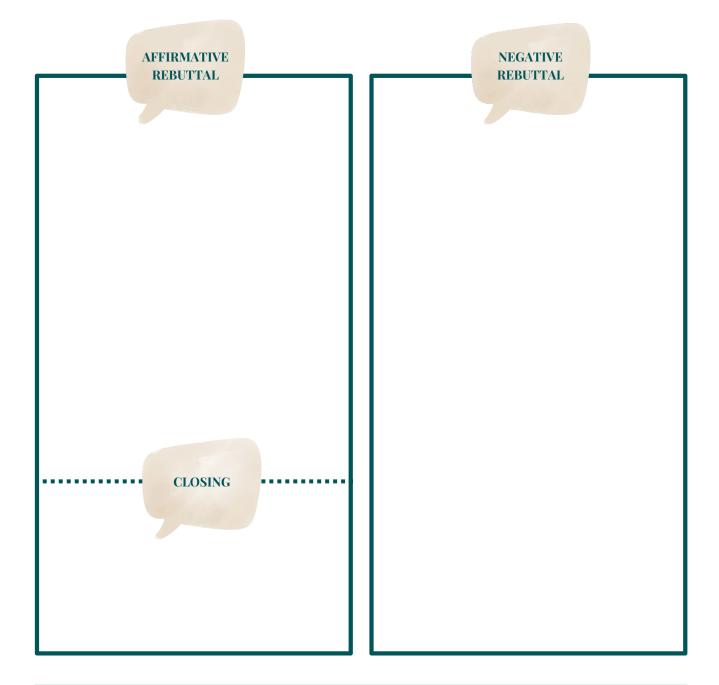
Reason #3 (if you have one)	suppor	your first ting argument? OREBUTTALS	EVIDENCE + SUPPORT
LEI S SHIFT GI	LAKS IU		
Anticipat objection		what might the	other side argue against you?
My potentia rebuttals		Response #1 Response #2	
CLOSING STA	ATEMEN	T: End strong! Rest	ate your position and leave a lasting impression!

FLOW SHEET tracking the arguments!

DEBATE TOPIC:			

AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE	NEGATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE
CONSTRUCTIVE	CONSTRUCTIVE
CX QUESTIONS	CX QUESTIONS

FLOW SHEET continued



FLOW CHECKLIST: Did you...

- write down the main claim for each speech?
- capture their key arguments? (There should have been 2-3...)
- note the evidence/supports they gave?
- miss arguments because you were writing too slowly?
- put arguments in the correct columns?

- use symbols/shortcuts to write faster?
- drop arguments? (Not respond)
- note when you clashed?
- see any contradictions?
- see and point out weaknesses?
- use your flow to help you make better rebuttals?

DEBATE BALLOT judge scoring sheet

SCORING RUBRIC

	AFFIRMATIVE				NEGATIVE					
clear opening statement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
strong reasons given	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
good use of evidence	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
respectful rebuttals	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
persuasive closing	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
style and confidence	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

 $Scoring: 1 = needs \ improvement \mid 2 = developing \mid 3 = satisfactory \mid 4 = good \mid 5 = excellent$

WINNER: Only mark one.	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
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FEEDBACK: Tell them what they did well and what to improve next time.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that

has successfully completed the BEGINNER STUDENT DEBATE COURSE

and has demonstrated skill in critical thinking, public speaking, and respectful discourse.

SKILLS COVERED:

- constructing arguments with evidence
- organizing claims for strongest impact
- delivering respectful speeches + cross-examinations
- planning and flowing debate
- speaking with confidence

INSTRUCTOR

DATE