

STEPS TO EFFECTIVE DEBATING

WORKSHEET

Name _____ Date _____

1 DEFINE the topic: _____

Now define the terminology you used—what does each word mean? For example, if your assertion is that “X is better than Y,” specify what is meant by “better.” This will bring focus and clarity to the debate. Define any unclear phrases below:

2 START the debate by asserting your position and then stating why you are correct. Make sure to support claims with evidence by using facts to quantify the argument.

3 REBUT the other side’s points. Rebuttal connects the arguments in a cohesive manner, which makes the exchange an actual debate and not just two sides talking at each other. During the rebuttal, the negative side must respond to the affirmative side’s points and then state its own arguments.

TYPICAL SEQUENCE OF DEBATE

1 Affirmative leader 2 Negative leader	Introduction: Define the issue, position and surrounding terminology. Introduce arguments.
3 Second affirmative speaker 4 Second negative speaker	Rebuttal: Counter previous arguments and provide additional arguments.
5 Third affirmative speaker 6 Third negative speaker	Mostly rebuttal.
7 Final affirmative speaker 8 Final negative speaker	Conclusion: Summarize position, making sure not to introduce any new arguments.

TIPS

- **Check your facts.** Where did you get your information from? Could the source have certain biases? It’s best to check with more than one source to gain a broader perspective on contentious matters. This could mean expanding your research into more than one medium (looking at books and newspapers) or region (check out international news coverage for a different perspective).
- **Remember that “those who assert must prove.”** One effective way to counter a citation or claim by the other side is a *press*, or demand for more information. For example, does this study take into account certain sociological factors? Often, an assertion will be made and the only counterargument is that the study is untrue, which shifts the burden of proof to the disputer. The *press* technique is more effective because it forces the asserter to justify his evidence.
- **Offer more than just one argument.** Don’t put all your eggs in one basket by getting too attached to a particular hypothesis. Come up with at least two or three arguments that support your assertion so all won’t be lost if your opponent shoots down your logic.
- **Be respectful!** It’s tempting to attack the arguer, especially if you believe he or she is being irrational. But to win the debate, you must focus on picking apart the arguments.