

Activity 37

“Constructing Topics”

Goal: understand deeper the specifics of debates and debate topics

Teacher explains what has to be considered when constructing debate topics

Both positions should be of similar importance:

- The topic should be controversial, there should be reasonable arguments for both sides. (Example for a poor topic: “We should have less crime in the society”)
- The topic should be well-balanced: there should be a lot of arguments at hand. (Example for a poor topic: “School hours should only cover 2 hours a day”)
- The topic should not be too broad. (Example for a poor topic: “The TV is bad”)
- The topic should not be about facts, but rather about values or advocating for change. In a debate about facts one side usually has a lack of evidence. (Example for a poor topic: “To eat is a necessity in life.”)
- Very sensitive topics which might be offensive to someone should not be taken up. (Example: some religious topics or some political topics or other topics which might hurt people)

Students get in pairs and focus on one area of controversy (for example: environmental questions, or gender questions, or school questions or others). They should draft at least two debate topics from it.

When presented to the plenary, the teacher asks which of the presented topics they want to debate.