

Whole-class Discussions: Triangle Debate

In this strategy, all students are involved in an informal, whole-class debate. It is a flexible tool that allows students to debate in a comfortable setting.

Purpose

- Encourage students to get involved in whole-class discussion.
- Create a comfortable atmosphere for students to share ideas and debate.

Payoff

Students will:

- participate in an informal debate.
- practise cognitively-demanding speaking skills in a comfortable environment.
- benefit from the research process.
- learn to process ideas and reach conclusions.

Tips and Resources

- This is not a formal debate - it is intended to facilitate whole-class discussion and critical thinking. Refer to Student/Teacher Resource, *Triangle Debating Tips*.
- It may be appropriate to divide the class in half, create two different questions, and prepare for two presentation days. The *Triangle Debate Organizer*, has space for up to 15 students per group; the maximum number of students suggested to ensure that there will be enough time for the presentation of the debate.
- It may be beneficial to do Triangle Debate three times in order to allow students the opportunity to work in all three groups.
- Spread debating over the term/semester/year to give students time to improve.
- If time is an issue, simplify the exercise by creating easier questions that do not require research.

Further Support

- Students who are uncomfortable about this process may benefit from working with a partner, sharing the research process and dividing up the debating process.
- Some students may require extra practice time in order to feel more comfortable with this process.

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What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on the topic or issue for the debate (e.g., in a Civics class teachers could suggest the Canadian government). Brainstorm with students to arrive at a statement that can be debated. Divide students into three groups: group 1 will argue for the issue, group 2 will argue against the issue, and group 3 will prepare comments and questions about the issue. Give students ample time to prepare - this will vary and may or may not include research. Review procedures for the debate so that students may properly prepare. Refer to Teacher Resource, <i>Triangle Debate Procedures</i>. After all research is complete and students are prepared to present arguments, make a final draft of the <i>Triangle Debate Organizer</i> and photocopy for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the issue. Create statement to be debated (e.g., Canada should become part of the United States). Students in groups 1 and 2 will prepare their debate speeches. Students in group 3 will prepare insightful comments and questions for each side of the debate. Students will understand all procedures for the debating process. Groups 1 and 2 will make decisions as to the order of their speakers and fill in their section in the <i>Triangle Debate Organizer</i>. Group 3 decides the order in which each member will ask a question.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange chairs in the classroom to reflect the three-group structure, enabling all members to see each other (a triangular shape works well). Act as timer or choose a student from group 3 to perform this function. Act as moderator, calling on students to speak. Act as judge, ensuring that students avoid negative comments. 	
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photocopy Student Resources, <i>Triangle Debate Groups 1 and 2- Reflections</i>, and <i>Group 3 - Observations</i>. Distribute to each student, according to his/her group. Give students ample time to reflect on their experience. Lead whole-class debriefing session about the experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill in the appropriate handout, focusing on both the group and individual roles. Participate in whole-class debriefing session.

Notes

Triangle Debating Tips

Here are some questions to think about while you prepare to present your ideas.

1. **Make sure you gather enough evidence to back up your argument:** Do I have proof to back up what I want to say?
2. **Organize your thoughts clearly and logically:** Will my audience be really clear about what I have said?
3. **Use strong, convincing language:** Do I sound confident? Have I used too many over-used words like *good, very, really, like*, etc.?
4. **Repeat, rephrase key ideas:** Will my audience hear what I want to say? Will my main points stick with them?
5. **Make eye contact with everyone in the room:** Do I make everyone in my audience feel as if I am talking directly to them?
6. **Vary your voice:** Do I sound monotonous? Have I varied the pace? Have I varied the volume, saving my loudest voice for the points I really want to drive home?
7. **Use appropriate gestures:** Does my body language emphasize what I want to say?
8. **Prepare for rebuttal:** Have I considered what the opposition will say; am I prepared to argue against it?
9. **Prepare for questions:** Have I considered what questions will be asked of me? Am I prepared to answer them convincingly?
10. **Practise, practise, practise:** Am I really prepared?

WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE YOUR ENTIRE GROUP'S SUCCESS!

Triangle Debating Procedures

Topic: _____

These procedures are intended to act as a guide. Refer to them throughout the process to ensure that you are on the right track.

STEP ONE: The class is divided into three groups

STEP TWO: Each group is given a different task to complete:
Group 1 will argue in favour.
Group 2 will argue against.
Group 3 will comment on remarks made by a speaker and pose questions to groups 1 and 2.

STEP THREE: Groups will get together to create a plan of attack, decide on their main argument and how they will organize their speeches. It is important, at this stage, to refer to the *Triangle Debate Organizer* handout and begin to make choices concerning the order of speakers.

STEP FOUR: Students work individually to prepare speeches. Everyone in groups 1 and 2 is required to speak for 2 minutes. Everyone in group 3 is required to comment for one minute on points made by the two previous speakers and to prepare two insightful questions to ask of group 1 and two insightful questions to ask of group 2.

STEP FIVE: When all individuals have created their speeches, each group comes together to listen to their arguments as a whole. It is important to follow the order set in the *Triangle Debate Organizer* so that they have a clear impression as to how their argument will sound. At this point, groups may offer suggestions, make changes and polish their arguments.

STEP SIX: Practise, practise, practise and be ready to go.

Remember - you are a team! Stay positive and support each other throughout the process.



Triangle Debate Organizer

The following is the order in which each speaker will speak. Simply follow the numbers to see when it is your turn.

Group 1
Speaks for 2 min.

Group 2
Speaks for 2 min.

Group 3
Comments on last two
speakers for 1 min.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

WHEN THIS IS FINISHED, EACH MEMBER OF GROUP 3 WILL POSE ONE QUESTION TO GROUP 1 AND ONE QUESTION TO GROUP 2.

THESE QUESTIONS MAY BE ANSWERED BY ANYONE IN GROUPS 1 AND 2.