

The Space Debates

Introduction:

Introduce the concept of a 'debate.' Ask students to share their experience of debate-style events. Why do we need to argue and be persuasive?

Warm-up activity:

1. Students get into groups of 4. Set the scene – they are going to space. They should decide on 1 thing each to take with them and tell their group what it is. This item is not critical to the mission but is something just for them.
2. We are in the rocket when we realise we don't have enough fuel. We must jettison some supplies to reduce our weight.
3. In their groups students should choose only 1 of their group's items to save.
4. Ask students to feed back to the other groups.

Debate topics:

Chose a topic from below for your students to debate:

- "Space should be explored by humans, not robots"
- "We should not spend taxpayer's money on the space industry"
- "Pluto should still be a planet"
- "There is life elsewhere in the Universe"
- "Humans should colonise Mars"

Debate activity:

1. Read out the debate topic
2. Allocate two sides or areas of the room as 'For' and 'Against'.

Ask students to decide what position they agree with and move to the area of the room that corresponds to their belief. If they do not have a strong opinion either way get them to make an initial decision – but **make it clear to everyone that they can change position at any time.**

3. Once students have chosen their position, give them some time to discuss with others in their team why they chose that position and how they could persuade others to join them.
4. Students should nominate someone from their team to state their case.
5. The debate begins! You can decide whether students should talk openly or if they should put their hands up and wait for you to call on them.

Wrap up:

Summarise the main points from the debate and create a class for and against list. Let the students know that these kinds of topics are continually under debate among scientists and politicians.

Facilitation tips:

- Ensure students know there is no right or wrong answer
- Encourage students to give reasons for their opinions
- Step-in if the students go off topic
- Ensure the debate is not dominated by one or two students
- Try not to influence the students' opinions