

1. Introducing Debating

Introducing debating to the classroom or setting up an A-Level debating club can be daunting. The first step is to provide your students with a clear introduction to what debates are, the different types of debate, where debates take place, and why they are so important.

Why debate?

Dr Katie East, a Senior Lecturer in History at Newcastle University, is passionate about debate. She encourages her students to debate issues and to think about the purpose of debate. This is her summary of some of the key reasons debating is so important:

Political and social function for decision-making

- Building a consensus
- Determining 'yes or no'
- Exploring different positions around a contentious topic

Building skills and confidence

- Finding your voice
- Improving academic achievement at school and beyond
- Raising aspirations

Introducing your students to debating

Use the 'What is a Debate?' information sheet to introduce your students to the idea of debating. Invite them to consider moments in their life when they may have taken part in a debate, perhaps without even realising it at the time.

What is a Debate?

A debate is a discussion in which people express different opinions about something. Debates can be formal (e.g. government debates) or informal (debates with family and friends) and can take place in a variety of settings. When we think of debates, we often think about people expressing their views verbally, but it is also possible to debate things in writing.



A person in a suit standing at a lectern.

Debates have an important political and social function for decision making. For example, in the United Kingdom Parliament, debates take place in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and at the end of a debate a decision is often made. You can find out more about parliamentary debates on the [UK Parliament website](#).

Although we often associate debates with politicians, you don't need to be an MP to engage in debate. There are lots of opportunities to debate things in school, at home and pretty much anywhere! Being able to express your opinions both verbally and in writing is an important skill. Debating can help you 'find your voice', and building your skills and confidence in this area can improve your academic achievement and help you succeed, whatever educational or career path you choose to take.