Debate Games
Debate Baseball

This activity reinforces basic debate concepts. It is a fun activity that allows you to get a sense of which debate concepts students understand well and which are not as clear to them. Students answer questions in the format of a mock baseball game.

**Time Allotment:** Approximately 40-60 minutes

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, students will review important debate terms and concepts and engage in collaborative learning, reinforcing material to which they have already been introduced.

**Materials and Preparation**
Write lists of questions that cover the debate concepts and terms that have been introduced to the students. These lists might include concepts that have been introduced in the previous several weeks of class or concepts introduced in textbook readings. Break the questions into four categories: 1) Single (difficult); 2) Double (very difficulty); 3) Triple (second most difficult); 4) Home Run (most difficult). The questions can be made harder or easier depending on the experience level of the students. Make sure that the lists are prepared in a manner that allows you to give a single question, from any category, to the "pitcher" at any give moment. Have the classroom arranged in a manner conducive to the game, with four bases.

**Method**
Divide the class into two teams. If you would like, have the students name their team. Explain the rules of Debate Baseball to the class. Debate Baseball simulates a baseball game, but is adapted for a classroom review session. Students from the "at bat" team actually step up to the plate. When a student is on the plate, she is given the choice of the category of question they want. For instance, she may say she is interested in a double. Once the student "at bat" has selected a category (difficulty level) for her question, the student the other team has designated as the "pitcher" reads the question from the card you give her.

As the teacher, you will function as an umpire. In this role, you decide whether each student gets the question right or not. If the student misses a question, her team gets an out. If she answers the question and thus gets a "hit", she moves to base that corresponds to the category she selected. In the example where she selects a double, she would move to second base. She would stay there until another member of her team got a hit. At that point, she would advance the same number of bases as does the batter.

As in baseball, when the student gets to home plate, her team receives one point. Record points on the board. After three outs it is the other team" turn to bat. Play as many innings as you have time for and as is pedagogically useful. Unlike baseball, there are no opportunities to tag another student out. Once a student has answered a question accurately, the only way to prevent her from scoring a point is make sure she does not get to the home plate before her team has gotten three outs. Adapt the rules as necessary depending on what is appropriate for your students.
Debate Jeopardy

This activity reinforces basic debate concepts. It is a fun activity that allows you to get a sense of which debate concepts students understand well and which are not as clear to them. It is also an easy way for students to review what they know.

**Time Allotment:** Approximately one class period

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, students will review important debate terms and concepts and engage in collaborative learning, reinforcing material to which they have already been introduced.

**Materials and Preparation**
Create a list of 10 questions for at least 6 categories. It is preferable to have two rounds (10-12) of categories prepared, but time constraints might prevent the class from playing two full rounds. Focus on debate concepts to which students have been introduced. It makes sense to have this activity before the first tournament in order to boost student's confidence and ensure they have reviewed material they will need to know in the average round.

Possible categories include:
- The affirmative case structure / Stock issues
- Specific affirmative case arguments
- Disadvantage structure
- Specific disadvantage scenarios
- Critique structure
- Topicality structure or Specific Topicality arguments
- Negative Theory
- Potpourri (which could include flowing, research, and filing)

They may cover concepts that have been introduced in the previous several weeks of class or concepts introduced in a debate textbook that the students have been assigned to read. The questions should be framed just as questions are in Jeopardy (i.e. what is ____).

Once the questions have been generated, create a Jeopardy game board: a ten by six column grid. Each column should be labeled with a different category. The rows should be numbered 100 through 1000 (the first question for each category should be the least difficult; the tenth should be the most difficult and they should increase in increments of 100.) If there is time for a second round, it might make sense to have double Jeopardy wherein the point-values of questions are doubled. It may make sense to assign certain squares as daily double squares - wherein the square is actually worth twice the points it would otherwise be worth. The game board does not have to be too fancy - in most situations it makes sense to just use the chalkboard. You may also want prizes (candy, etc.) to reward teams for performing well during the game.
Method
The activity is a group review exercise that is modeled on the television show Jeopardy. At the beginning of the class, explain (or have a student explain) the rules of Jeopardy. To adapt Jeopardy to a classroom setting, break the class into two (or potentially three) teams and have these teams compete against each other. Elect a score keeper to keep track of each team’s points on the blackboard. Once you have divided the class into teams and elected a score keeper, begin by letting the first student from the first team a select question. To select a question, a student should ask for a category and a point value (for example, flowing for 100). If the student answers the question correctly related to that category and point value accurately, their team gets the points associated with the question. If not, another team has the opportunity to steal the points by answering the question correctly. If no team can answer a question correctly, the points are forfeited. Allowing teams to “steal” questions ensures that the competition is stiffened and that all students are paying attention.

Rotate who answers questions so that each student on a given team answers one question before any student on that same team answers two questions. Although, when the first team has missed a question and another team is trying to steal the points, it may make sense to allow the other team to talk silently as a group before attempting to steal the points. This type of whole group, timed (20 seconds or so) discussion provides an opportunity for collaborative learning because teams have to work together to decide upon the right answer.

If the activity has enough time, each student will get to answer multiple questions.
Nerf Football Review

This activity introduces or reinforces new debate terms and concepts. Students pass around a football with debate terms written on its sides. When a student catches the ball, she must define the term on which her thumb lands.

**Time Allotment:** 20-30 minutes

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, students will be introduced to the meanings of new terms and concepts in debate and have reinforced their understanding of certain debate concepts.

**Materials and Preparation**

A Nerf football labeled with the names of debate terms and concepts. For example, if you want the class to review the stock issues, one side of the football would be labeled harms, one side solvency, one side inherency, one side topicality, etc. If you want the class to review disadvantage structure, one side would be labeled uniqueness, one side link, one side internal link, and one side impact.

**Method**

After a brief introductory lecture on the concepts you would like students to master (for instance, the structures of a disadvantage), tell the students to move their chairs in circle. The students will pass the football around the circle. Whoever catches it must, in her own words, define the term on which her thumb rests. If she defines the term accurately, she gets to pass the football on to whomever she wants. If she has trouble defining a term, it is a fumble. In the case of a fumble, she must pass the ball back to the person who threw it to them.
Debate Millionaire

This activity reinforces basic debate concepts. It is a fun activity to get a sense of which debate concepts students understand well and which are not as clear to them. It is also an easy way for students to review what they know. It is modeled after the television show, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?"

**Time Allotment:** Approximately one class period

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, students will review important debate terms and concepts and engage in collaborative learning, reinforcing material to which they have already been introduced.

**Materials and Preparation**
A list of questions that review important debate terms and concepts of varying difficulty. In order to prepare for the game, rank the difficulty of the questions. That way, when you ask questions that become increasingly difficult, you will be able to select the appropriate questions with greater ease.

**Method**
The game operates similarly to the game show. Three students (instead of just one) go up as a team to sit in the "hot seat." The students in the "hot seat" can confer with each other, but must come up with an answer within a limited (30 second) timeframe. After discussion, one of them must answer the question. The students must alternate so that each of them answers one question out of every three.
If they answer the question accurately, they get the points associated with the question they asked. In addition, every time the students get the answer right, you ask debate trivia questions that become increasingly difficult. If they answer the question inaccurately, they lose and are no longer in the "hot seat". Every 4-5 questions, there should be a milestone question. If the students answer the milestone question correctly, they are guaranteed the point-value of that question. For instance, if the milestone question is worth 1,000 points and the students answer the question correctly, they will get 1,000 points.

If they get up to the milestone question, but answer incorrectly, they will lose the points for all of the questions that they answer correctly. Thus, the only way to ensure that they receive points for
a turn is to answer a milestone question correctly. The point-scale continues to increase until 1,000,000, as in the game show.
You can adapt the format from the game show, so that the students have to come up with their own answers to the questions. Or, they can be asked in the format of the game show (in which students choose between four possible answers).
Poll the Class, phone calls, 50/50, etc. can be used as "Lifelines". Lifelines are used when the three students in the hot seat do not know the answer. They have one of each type of Lifeline. Poll the Class allows the students to get a show of hands about what the class thinks the answer is. Phone Calls allow the students in the hot seat to select a particular student out of the entire class and ask her the answer. 50/50 is only appropriate if the questions have four possible answers. In these situations, 50/50 eliminates two incorrect answers, leaving one right and one wrong answer. If there are not four possible answers, 50/50 cannot be used as a lifeline.
In order to allow this review game to run its course, you will need to have extensive lists or questions. After one to three rounds of play, the team of three students with the most points wins.
Debate Games

Debate Skits

This activity reinforces basic debate concepts. Students express their knowledge of a particular debate concept through skits.

**Time Allotment:** Approximately one class period. Potentially longer.

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, students will develop skills in expressing complex ideas in their own words and build confidence in public speaking.

**Method**

Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group a debate topic or theme and tell them to construct a short skit (5 minutes or less) from that theme. Presentation topics might be anything from the concept of inherency to the implementation of a particular plan to the impact scenario of a particular disadvantage. Let students know that they can create the skit with any scene or characters that they want, so long as it does a thorough and engaging job introducing the topic.

When students are designing their skit, there should be a period of creativity. While you want students to come up with new interpretations of debate concepts, it is important that: you stay involved, encouraging each group and making sure that all groups are on task, brainstorming and writing down ideas. Additionally, you should be available to clarify ideas about the topics of presentation.

After each group is finished planning their skit, have every group perform for the other members of the class.
Telling Stories

This activity develops speaking and story-telling skills, in it, each team of debaters writes a summary of their affirmative case. It gives students practice explaining the affirmative. This activity is especially appropriate for students who are already partners who have tournament experience or students who are preparing for their first tournament.

Time Allotment: Approximately 40-80 minutes at the shortest. Depending on the variations and follow-up activities, this can take several days.

Objectives: By the end of this activity, students will develop skills in argumentation through narrative and develop skills in summarizing arguments.

Method

Each team (pair of two students) in the class should write a brief (you should select a length - 30, 45, or 60 second) introduction to the affirmative case that they either do or plan to run at tournaments. Writing this overview can be homework or an in-class assignment.

Students may need instruction about what an effective overview look like. If you have (or can write) a model of an excellent overview (introduction to the case), you may want to hand out photocopies or project it with an overhead. Have the student read the model and then brainstorm a list of characteristics of effective overviews as a class. If you do not have such a model, then hold a brainstorm session without one.

In addition to whatever ideas students generate during the brainstorm, you can give them an introduction to overviews. An overview is read at the beginning of the 2AC or the 2AR. It frames the debate and the rest of the speech, outlining the reasons why an affirmative ballot is justified. It addresses the inherency, harms and solvency of the case. It tells the whole story of the affirmative in an engaging, persuasive, and word efficient way. It uses compelling, pithy language - sometimes pulling the best sentences or phrases from the text of cards.

Once the overview is written, have a speaker from each team deliver this speech to the class. After each speaker presents, have the rest of the class discuss the speech. They can address what elements of the story were most and least effective, what else could have been included or
excluded, and what they did not understand. You may also have students offer constructive criticism about presentation style. After each pair has presented and received criticism, the students should re-write their introductions. You can also give students the time to practice their revised overviews, integrating some of the feedback they received on presentation style.

Four Corner Debates

Materials Needed:

- four posters, each labeled in large letters with one of the following: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
- a teacher-generated list of statements for discussion (provided)
- writing paper and pencils

This simple and active strategy helps students focus their thinking about topics of debate as they prepare to write a well-supported paragraph stating their position.

Before the Lesson
Create four posters/signs printed in large letters with the following labels, one label per sign:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Place each poster in a different corner of the classroom.

The Lesson
Present to students a statement that takes a stand on an issue of interest to students or of importance to the world.
Education World has collected a handful of Web sites that make good sources of timely, high-interest debate topics in the classroom. Click here and scroll to Debate Topics for Classroom Use.

For this lesson, you might use one of the following statements as the starting point for a classroom discussion. Some of the statements are not appropriate discussion starters for elementary level students; select an appropriate statement that will engage your students. As an alternative, you might choose to make a statement about a controversy in the news or about an issue of interest to people in your area.

- Students should wear uniforms to school.
- Kids should be able to have TVs in their bedrooms.
Debate Games

- Beauty is only skin deep.
- Wearing a helmet when riding a bike should be mandatory.
- The Pledge of Allegiance should be recited in school each day.
- Because many kids need more sleep, school should start two hours later than it does now.
- Chewing gum should be banned from schools.
- Scientists should be allowed to use animals to test new medicines.
- Kids should be able to spend their allowance any way they want to.
- Kids younger than 18 should be able to make their own decisions about whether to get a body piercing.

Select a statement appropriate for your students, read aloud the statement, and give students 5 minutes to collect their thoughts about the topic. Then ask students if they

- strongly agree,
- agree,
- disagree, or
- strongly disagree

with the statement. Direct those who strongly agree to move to the corner of the classroom where the Strongly Agree sign is posted, those who agree to move to the corner of the classroom where the Agree sign is posted, and so on...

Hopefully, you have four groups gathered in different corners of the classroom. Appoint one student in each corner to be the note taker, and give students 5-10 minutes to discuss with the other students in their corner the reasons they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

At the end of the discussion period, ask one student from each group to share with the class some of the ideas they discussed in their group.

Perhaps one of the four groups made such a strong case that some students have changed their minds about their reaction to the statement. If that is the case, at this point in the activity give students an opportunity to change corners.

Provide 5-10 more minutes for students to continue their group discussions. At this point, every student in the group should be taking notes. At the end of the discussion time, each student uses those notes to write a concise paragraph stating his or her position on the issue. (For example, I strongly agree with the statement [statement goes here] because...) Students should include in their paragraphs the four strongest points supporting their position.

Extension Activity

- Have students come up with their own discussion topics.
Debate Games

- Over a couple class periods, use the four corner strategy to discuss three or four different statements. Then have students write a position paper on the statement they have the strongest feelings about.
- Provide time for students to read aloud their papers. Then provide time for peer reaction. First, ask students to share only positive comments about their classmates' papers; then provide time for students to share only constructive criticism. ("You might have done this differently...")

Inner Circle Outer Circle

Materials Needed

- chairs, one per student
- writing paper and pencils/pens
- a topic for debate (topic/resource ideas provided)

Lesson Plan

This debate strategy focuses on listening to the views of others and responding to them. It is an excellent pre-writing or debate strategy.

Arrange students into four groups of equal size. Arrange students in Group 1 into a circle of chairs facing out, away from the circle. Arrange students in Group 2 into a circle of chairs around Group 1, facing the students in Group 1. Groups 3 and 4 gather around the perimeter of the circle, facing the circle.

Select an issue that students will be motivated to discuss/debate.

Now, provide students in the inner circle 10-15 minutes to discuss the topic. During that time, all other students focus their attention on the students in the inner circle. No one else is allowed to speak. Other students take notes about points those students bring up; notes are used in a follow-up classroom discussion and/or for writing an editorial opinion expressing a point of view on the issue at hand.