

Debate

Examples of topics for debate are:

- Caterpillars are a nuisance and should be kept out of residential gardens.
- Some butterfly host plants are basically weeds and should not be planted.
- Everyone should plant gardens to encourage butterflies.
- Leeches serve no purpose at all and should be eliminated.
- Leeches are important to help maintain the biodiversity of the rainforest.
- We need more houses so it is OK to clear large areas of rainforest.

1. Model a debate using adults or older students. This is important as many students will not have seen or taken part in a debate.
2. Model how to make supporting statements, justify opinions and use evidence to back these opinions.
3. Negotiate the rules of debate with the students.
4. Organise the students into two teams; one for the topic and one against.
5. Each team chooses four speakers who will present different points of view.
6. The teams prepare their cases.
7. Before starting the debate remind the participants and the audience about the rules of debate.
8. Two speakers from each team give their point of view. At this stage there is no redress from the other side.
9. After the four speakers have finished the floor is open to discussion.
10. Record ideas and opinions both for and against.
11. The teams then discuss and amend, if necessary, the statements to follow.
12. The next speakers make their statements.
13. Again the floor is open to discussion.
14. The final speakers make their concluding statements referring to the information that has gone before and rebutting the opposing statements.

This format is a plan which changes with the age, levels of ability, knowledge and experience of students. With younger students the process will need to follow a much simpler format where only one opinion is explored.