

2. Formal and Informal Debates

- 1 Recap on what a debate is (see the 'What is a Debate?' information sheet).
- 2 Give each pair/small group a set of post-it notes. They have 60 seconds to list on separate post-it notes as many places as they can think of where debates take place today. They may come up with ideas including:
 - Parliament - House of Lords and House of Commons
 - Universities
 - Work
 - Dinner table
 - Television (e.g. Question Time)
 - Social media (e.g. X, formerly known as Twitter; TikTok)
 - Pub
 - Classroom
 - Debating clubs/societies
 - Newspaper columns/letters pages

- 3 Display these headings on your whiteboard or SMARTboard:

Formal Settings for Debate

Informal Settings for Debate

- 4 Invite your students to come out to the front of the classroom and stick their post-it notes on the board underneath the correct heading. Some of these places may be venues for both formal and informal debate (eg. a classroom) so some students may stick their post-its in the middle.
- 5 Ask students to put up their hand if they have ever taken part in a debate in either formal or informal settings. Invite your students to discuss whether informal debate is a regular part of their lives, or something they avoid. Ask them to consider why this might be the case.
- 6 Share the 'DEBATE' acrostic sheet with your students. Let students know this is a good way of keeping debates civil and demonstrates expected behaviours.



Rules for Informal Debate

D

ig deep into the other person's views. Ask them questions. Listen carefully.

E

cho. Check that you have understood the other person's view. 'So, if I understand you correctly, you believe...'

B

uild from the other person's position. "I can see your point about." or "I can understand why you feel strongly about..."

A

rgue. State your case clearly and without being personal. "My view is..."

T

ake on board some of the other person's views. Can you find a point of agreement anywhere? "I think what we are both saying is..."

E

nd on a note of conciliation. "I think we just need to agree to differ on this, but it's been interesting to hear your views".

