



How to...

WOW!

The longest debate on record lasted more than 29 days. It took place in Australia in 1996.



Start your own debate club

Bring friends together to have fun, challenging arguments about current events.

First things first: What exactly is a debate? Simply put, it's an argument with rules about how to express your point of view. Topics can range from serious to silly, similar to the debates found each week on p8 of *The Week Junior*. A debate club is a group of students who get together to present opposite sides of chosen topics. Participating in debates can help you develop stronger research habits and boost your public-speaking skills. If your school doesn't already have a debate club, it's easy to get one going. Here's how.

Form the club

It may be worth checking with a teacher at school first to see if they could help you start one. Or you could get together a group of friends—you need at least four kids—to create a debate club outside of school. If you are practicing social distancing, you can gather on a video call or outdoors at a park or backyard.

Pick a topic

At your first meeting, have everyone write down a few topics they'd like to debate on slips of paper. Keep them in a jar, and rotate who gets to pick one at the beginning of each debate. A few examples: Should teachers give homework? Should kids be able to vote in Presidential elections? Should humans live on other planets? Do dogs or cats make better pets?



It's fun to research topics.

Try a basic debate

At the beginning of the meeting, split up into two teams. Choose your topic out of the jar and decide which team will argue "pro" (in favor of) and which will argue "con" (against). Then come up with your arguments. Sometimes you may have to argue in favor of something you don't agree with, which is part of the challenge. Come back together, and give each team a set amount of time (4 to 5 minutes) to present an opening statement and main points of their argument. Listen closely to the other side, and take notes. Once both teams have presented, split up again so that each team can come up with its rebuttal (response to the other side's argument).

Each team finishes by presenting its rebuttal, as well as a brief closing statement.

Declare a winner

Good debate topics don't have clear right or wrong answers, so declaring a winner isn't that easy. Instead of focusing on which side has the correct answer, choose a winner in a different way. For instance, the winner could be the side that presented their ideas the most clearly or with the strongest examples. You can have a parent or older sibling be the moderator (judge) who declares the winner. Or you can invite other kids or parents to watch and vote on the winner at the end.

4 ways to practice public speaking

It's common to feel nervous when you speak or debate in front of other people. Try these tips to prepare.

Record yourself

Set up a phone in your room, and hit record as you practice delivering points for a mock debate. Play it back and critique yourself.



Watch the experts

TED Talks is a group that gives people



around the world—including kids—the opportunity to make speeches on different subjects. Check out [tinyurl.com/TWJUS-Speeches](https://www.ted.com/TWJUS-Speeches) to get inspired by top speakers under age 20.

Read aloud

Reading a picture book to a sibling or a few chapters of a longer book to your family can help you learn to speak slowly and enunciate your words in a stress-free setting.



Just breathe

Before you give a speech or present a debate, take



a deep breath in for five counts. Then let your breath out for five slow counts. This will help your body remain calm while you talk. Stand up straight and begin. You've got this!