

## Debate Writing Tips

The debate writing assignment is to generate classroom debates on relevant topics to the students. It is brief – should be no more than two to three pages (1.5-spaced, 11-point font, block paragraph (no indent), extra space between paragraphs) and requires credible sources. Note: Debates have a specific format that would provide for publishing and class use. A template for the debate is provided.

Writing a debate involves four steps:

1. Identify the debate topic, issue statement and the two sides of the issue.
2. Research the issue. Sources include the internet, personal interviews, and books/journals.
3. Identify the stakeholders involved in the issue.
4. Organize the debate for a first draft.
5. Revise the debate. (Often many times until it is “just right”!)

Considerations when writing a debate for class:

1. **Determine the debate topic, issue statement and sides for the debate you write:**

- a. *Does your debate topic have **business implications**?* While many debate topics relating to government regulation and society have moral considerations, how does it relate to business? Phrase the issue statement toward business. The Debate topic may be a statement or a question.

Examples:

Topic: “Facebook: A Change for the Good or Hanging Users Out to Dry?”

ISSUE: “Should tobacco companies promote smokeless tobacco products due to declining cigarette sales?”

Topic: “Gun Ownership “

ISSUE: “Should people be able to own assault weapons?”

- b. *Is your issue statement specific enough to present two sides?* The debate issue statement should have a “YES” and a “NO” answer. If a debate issue is too broad there may be more than one “side” or solution, and would require a vast amount of information. Both of these examples are about health/nutrition and obesity issues:

Example that may be too broad: “ISSUE: Is it necessary to create public policy to regulate the marketing of unhealthy food to children?”

More specific example: “ISSUE: Should restaurants be required to provide calorie counts on their menus?”

- c. *Do the two sides of the issue present distinct positions?* Learners must be able to distinguish which argument aligns closest with their position. Ambiguous or multi-faceted positions are more difficult to ascertain. Use concise terms “Company X has a right to ...; ‘ “Regulation is needed to ....”.

**2. What will the target audience gain from the debate?** Will the target audience want to participate in the debate? What will they learn from the debate? How does the debate fit in our class learning objectives, frameworks and topics?

**3. Does your debate refer to a recent or local situation?** Students may be more comfortable with a debate about a local company or a local industry. Likewise, if an issue is current or in recent years, it is much more interesting than if the issue is from decades past.

**4. Does your debate include relevant, but effective information?** A debate different than a case is only prose (written words) and needs to provide the information that learners need to decide which side of the issue they would most likely support. A good debate requires research! Where will you get the information? What information is most relevant to your issue?

**5. Is your debate concise and to the point?** Debates should introduce the facts of the issue without being wordy.

Structure of a debate:

<b><u>Element:</u></b> <b><u>(recommended length)</u></b>	<b><u>Description:</u></b>
<b>Introduction</b> (one paragraph)	This is the attention getter! Make it interesting. The introduction identifies the topic and issue to be examined and explains the parameters of the debate (single company, industry, societal impact – or specific stakeholder impact). Provide the context for the situation. Provide the company name if a specific company.
<b>Overview</b> (1-3 paragraphs)  (Background)	The overview defines the terminology or background of the debate topic and issue. For example, if the debate is on a specific marketing tactic (ie. greenwashing) you would need to define what the term means.  Consider the regulatory, professional or technical information that influence the issue.
<b>Stakeholder View</b> (2-4 paragraphs)	Flowing from the overview, provide the different perspectives of relevant stakeholders on the issue. Preferred organization is to have one paragraph for each stakeholder groups. Stakeholders will typically be an organization (advocacy group, regulatory agency, company). Strive to find credible organizations to represent “society” interests.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Conclude the debate with a compelling summary of the above information – alluding to an urgency in resolving this issue

<b>Sources</b>	Provide all sources of information at the end of the debate, alphabetically listed in MLA format.
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Debate

Author Name (s)

**<Enter Debate Topic Here>**

<Enter Debate Issue Statement Here as a question>

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Begin debate content here with an Introduction. The format should be block paragraphs (no indent of first line), spacing at 1.5 (in between single and double), and the font should be at least 11 pts. Between the paragraphs, make an additional line space. Paragraphs should focus on one topic only. Each paragraph should be at least three sentences, but most likely more.

The second paragraph will typically include the background information about the debate This is usually the start of definitions that often require a credible source. The preferred format for a debate document is to reference the source in the text. For example, if a regulatory organization has ruled on an issue, you could say something like: The Federal Drug Administration provides guidelines on the sale of dietary supplements that stipulate ingredient listing on the label. Then, you must include it in the Sources listing how to find the referenced guideline. If you have some information that you want to explain further, use a footnote.

The rest of the debate continues ....

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There are two sides to every issue:

1. <Enter first side statement here.>
2. <Enter second side statement here.>

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Sources:

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<List sources here, alphabetically, using MLA format.>