



Debate Challenge B2

I can develop my opinion and enter into a debate about it.

Entrepreneurial Civic Education



Debattierclub

How can we exchange arguments for and against a certain topic and be fair at the same time?


The debate club will teach you the rules and help you learn to discuss controversial issues, which may even concern your own group.

Teacher Guide

The materials contain a detailed step-by-step description of the challenge to facilitate a direct implementation in the classroom. The teaching materials are designed to be used together with the student materials (=worksheets). The ➔-sign indicates optional tasks for a deeper understanding. All materials are provided at www.youthstart.eu.



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Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges Programme

based on the TRIO Model for Entrepreneurship Education – www.youthstart.eu

Core Entrepreneurial Education				Entrepreneurial Culture						Entrepreneurial Civic Education	
	Idea Challenge		Hero Challenge		Empathy Challenge		Storytelling Challenge		Buddy Challenge		My Community Challenge
	My Personal Challenge		Lemonade Stand Challenge		Perspectives Challenge		Trash Value Challenge		Open Door Challenge		Volunteer Challenge
	Real Market Challenge		Start Your Project Challenge		Extreme Challenge		Be A YES Challenge		Expert Challenge		Debate Challenge

The TRIO Model is a holistic definition of entrepreneurship that encompasses three areas:

Core Entrepreneurial Education comprises basic qualifications for entrepreneurial thinking and acting: developing and implementing original and innovative ideas in a creative and structured manner.

Entrepreneurial Culture refers to personal development: self-initiative, self-confidence, teamwork, empowering oneself and others.

Entrepreneurial Civic Education aims at enhancing social competences and empowering students in their role as citizens: assuming responsibility for oneself, others and the environment.

Each challenge belongs to a **challenge family** that has its own icon with a colour code that corresponds to one of the three TRIO areas. A challenge family comprises several challenges on different competence levels. The letter codes given in the teaching materials correspond to the following levels:

A1 – primary level; A2 – secondary level I; B1 and B2 – secondary level II; C1 – transition from secondary level II to tertiary level. Each level builds on the preceding level.



Unit Planner

Theme	Debate Club
Level	B2
Challenge Family	<p>"Debate Challenge" – fostering a climate of constructive communication</p> <p>If you want to have a fair debate, you'll need clear rules. If you want to convince others, you will need to structure your thoughts and make a good point. By using the "philosophy box", primary school students will be encouraged to let their thoughts wander freely and to share these thoughts with one another. Different people have different opinions. Students at the lower secondary level will explore how it is still possible to make democratic decisions. In debate club, students at the upper secondary level exchange arguments for and against a topic according to precise rules.</p>
Time / Length	12 Periods
Big Idea behind the Challenge	<p>You can't just memorise democratic processes and values. It requires a mix of listening, convincing arguments, and a willingness to respond to one another for democratic processes to develop. The debate club provides an excellent platform. The students are challenged to take sides on controversial issues, demonstrate their perception of problems, propose ideas for the resolution of the problems addressed and find arguments to defend their own positions.</p> <p>Participants of a debate club will experience that using reasoned argument when dealing with a topic is something they have to learn first but also something they can practise. Expressing yourself precisely, clearly presenting your own point of view, knowing what your goals are, and being able to define and to verify how to get there, are what debating can teach you.</p> <p>The debate club not only offers students a setting in which they can improve their rhetoric skills but will also especially help them to deepen their expertise in dealing with issues young people (should) have an opinion on. Thinking in a structured way, developing a clear argument, and responding to other arguments precisely - these are core competences, not only in the spoken but also in the written word.</p>
Entrepreneurial Competences according to the Reference Framework	<p>I can identify my strengths and weaknesses and I pursue my goals persistently. In the process I am willing to take responsibility and work to overcome potential difficulties.</p> <p>When debating with others I can find arguments for my ideas in a structured way.</p>

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	<p>In cooperation with others, I can develop ideas for the resolution of problems and find arguments to support them.</p> <p>I am good at networking and at developing collaborations.</p>
Language Objective	<p>I can express my opinion in form of an argument with supporting reasons, details, or facts.</p> <p>I can listen to an argument, identify uncertainties, and reformulate them into questions.</p> <p>I use a variety of transitions when presenting my point of view (e.g. "In my opinion", "according to the study published in", "on the other hand", "first", "second", "finally", ...).</p>
Content Vocabulary (Word Wall)	Debating, Debate, Arguments, Argumentation, Opposition, Government, Debate Club
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can talk for 5 minutes before a group. I can prepare a well-structured speech to demonstrate a point of view with carefully chosen arguments. (individually, orally) During a debate, I can communicate with my team members, develop a team strategy and agree on a common approach. (in groups, orally) I can assess the significance of a speech, weigh up the arguments and pose relevant questions. (individually, orally)
Necessary Background Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic presentation techniques General knowledge corresponding to the topic of debate
Mind & Body	For physical exercises to help students activate and concentrate as well as improve their mindfulness go to: www.youthstart.eu (incl. video clips). Choose the appropriate exercise(s) to support your challenge!
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read through the documents. Prepare a beamer for the presentation. Make a copy of worksheets 1–5 for each student.
Step-By-Step Activities	
Step 1	<p>Introduction "Debate Club" (worksheets 1–4)</p> <p>Explain the concept of a "debate club" to the students (see "Rules", "Motions", and "Background Information").</p> <p>Review with the students the Self-/Peer-Assessment (Worksheet 4), so that they become familiar with the debate expectations. The Self-/Peer-Assessment is the same assessment to be used by teachers. Worksheet 2 offers an even more detailed basis.</p>

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Step 2	<p>Argumentation Exercise – 1 Period (or more if necessary)</p> <p>Divide the students into groups of three. Introduce a topic to the class for debate. The question should allow for the participants to take a clear position for or against the proposed issue. Each group is then assigned to one side (government, opposition). The students will now find as many arguments as possible to support their position and write them down in key words. The arguments are presented to the other groups. After that, the students all work together to find further arguments. At the end of the practice debate, have students rate BOTH themselves and a partner using the Self-/Peer-Assessment (Worksheet 4). Finally, have students report to the rest of the class on how well they did. What was difficult in the exercise? What parts were easy? (see "Full Debate Example" at the end of the Teacher's Guide)</p>
Step 3	<p>Debating – 10 Periods</p> <p>Participating in around five debates will help the students improve their argumentation skills and refine their presentation techniques. Form new teams before each debate.</p>
Step 4	<p>Debate Self-/Peer-Assessment (worksheet 4)</p> <p>Hand out enough copies of the Self-/Peer-Assessment worksheet so that every student has a copy. Students should individually assess themselves on how well they performed in the debate.</p> <p>If there is time, hand out an additional Self-/Peer-Assessment worksheet per team. Each team should assess itself. At the end, the jury reports back on how the debate went.</p>
Step 5	<p>End of Unit Self-Assessment (worksheet 5)</p> <p>(To be filled out individually) The students will now assess themselves. Read through each attribute slowly. Give enough time for students to reflect and assess themselves by circling the appropriate smileys. It might be necessary to further clarify each attribute by giving the students an example (e.g. "I can identify my strengths and weaknesses – Can you give an example of each?"). Once completed, you can either collect the questionnaires or use them for a classroom discussion.</p>
➡ Step 6	<p>Self-Reflection Wrap-Up (worksheet 6)</p> <p>(To be filled out individually or in pairs) Be sure to read each question out loud in class and give students time to write down their responses. Use this wrap-up worksheet for a final discussion!</p>
Context within the Challenge Programme	<p>This challenge builds on the "Debate Challenges" for the lower learning levels. To prepare the students, it is advisable that they first complete the Challenge Families "Idea", "Empathy", "and "Storytelling".</p>



Useful Links	<p>About the Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges project: www.youthstartproject.eu</p> <p>Further teaching materials (including videos): www.youthstart.eu www.ifte.at, www.debattierklubwien.at</p>
Instructional Film	<p>Search for "Youthstart TV" on www.youtube.at. There you will find the "Debattierclub" folder which includes a teaser and an instructional film on the student debate initiative "Misch dich ein – der Debattierclub".</p>
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Rules for a Debate Club

Purpose	<p>A debate is a discussion that is governed by a fixed order. Both sides take turns to present their position in a speech for which they have limited time. When debating, you should make a point of referring to what the previous speaker has said. Questions and interjections are carefully controlled. To begin your debate, you need to define a topic. Mostly, it will be about some fictitious state intervention in the environment or a government's influence on the community or economy. Principles of philosophy or moral dilemmas are also suited for debates.</p> <p>Parliamentary debates are characterised by teams competing against each other. Each team represents one of two opposing positions: The affirming side ("government") and the negative side ("opposition"). The individual team members are not allowed to contradict one another. A jury sees to it that the teams stick to the rules of debate. It is important that each team strictly adheres to the rules. Debating will not only train the ability to speak in front of an audience but also to present complicated issues, respond to arguments of the opposite party or recapitulate the different positions. In order to be able to express an opinion, it is fundamental to have a basic understanding of the issue. Therefore, debate is an interesting method that helps to develop a range of competences, including professional, methodological, social, and personal competence.</p> <p>There are different debating formats: the Offene Parlamentarische Debatte (Open Parliamentary Debate, OPD) and the British Parliamentary (BP) style, used for international championships. The World Schools Style (WSS) of debating derives from the Australasian debating format and is used at the World Schools Debating Championships. Generally, every debating format is suitable to handle different issues, whereas their basic rules vary in their form and purpose.</p>
Participants	6–12 persons (for larger groups we recommend two parallel debates)
Time/Length	20–90 minutes per debate (depending on the educational background)
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with the topic in class, prepare introductory speeches • pen and paper to take notes during debate • define a topic of debate • perhaps you might want to include an external person as jury



Step-by-Step Activities

Stage 1 / Topic:

All topics qualify in their own way for debating. In case it has not yet been discussed in class, an introductory note and/or excerpt on the topic for discussion might help to introduce the topic. It is important for the speakers to prepare the topic (10–20 minutes) so they can truly express an opinion, accordingly.

Stage 2 / Motion:

The motion underlying the debate should be defined in a way that it already proposes a specific solution to the suggested problem. The solution is mostly an action for the state to take in order to change the status quo, such as "Shall it be compulsory for children to visit kindergarten?" or "Should donations to political parties be forbidden?".

The proposition will be responsible for explaining why the respective action should be taken. Though the type of action must comply with the wording of the motion.

Stage 3 / The speakers' positions:

The speakers' positions are decided upon: An equal number of persons either form opposing teams or argue against each other individually.

There are mostly two opposing teams, consisting of two to three persons each. It is also possible, however, to split the groups into three single positions on each side.

Another possibility is to participate as free speakers. These are positioned before the last speakers of the proposition and opposition. They shall have half of the speaking time of the fractions' speakers and may choose if they want to argument in favour or against the motion. In a debate, no more than 12 people should hold a speech.

A debate also requires jurors who ensure the rule-conformity of the course of debate, stop the time, and ideally give feedback and nominate a winner at the end of the debate.

Stage 4 / Speaking time and interjections:

The appropriate duration of a speech is 3 to 7 minutes. In the case that a debate involves a greater number of participants, you may also choose a shorter duration.

At the beginning and the end of every speech, there should be a short amount of "protected time" during which the opposition has no possibility of interjecting. Depending on the overall duration of the speech, 30 to 60 seconds might be adequate. The beginning and the end of this protected time is signalled, e.g. by a knock on the table.

Stage 5 / Debate:

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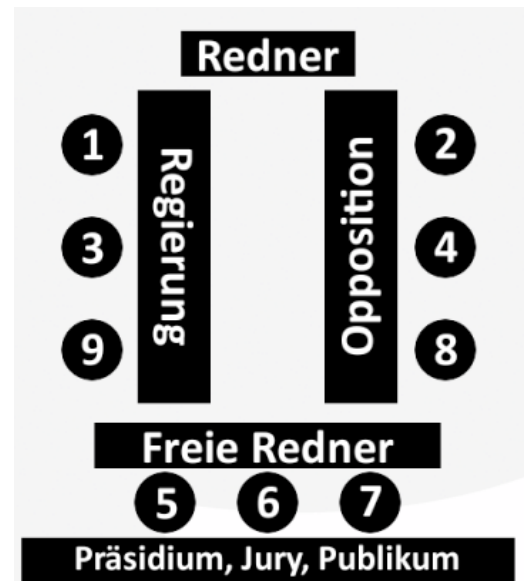
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The example shows two teams with three speakers each, as well as three independent "free speakers", according to the roles of the Offene Parlamentarische Debatte. In that case, the fractions' speakers have a speaking time of 7 minutes, whereas the free speakers may talk for 3.5 minutes. The first and the last 60 seconds of the fraction speakers' speech are protected; the free speakers have 30 seconds of protected time at the beginning and the end of their speech.

The teams have 15 minutes to prepare. The independent speakers are informed of the topic only at the start of debate.

The actual debate is officially started by the president who repeats the topic – the motion.



- The first speaker of the government-side (1) explains which problem will be solved by the motion, how the motion can solve the problem, and why it is right to solve the problem.
- The first speaker of the opposition-side (2) will now criticise the motion and bring forward arguments against it.
- The second speakers (3) and (4) present further arguments. It is especially important to respond to the arguments of the foregoing speaker and, as much as possible, to rebut them.
- In *Offene Parlamentarische Debatten* (OPD) three free speakers (5), (6), and (7) may present their arguments after the second speaker of the opposition (4). They are informed of the topic only at the beginning of the debate, whereas fraction speakers have 15 minutes to prepare. The free speakers must form their opinion in the short time during debate, decide on the position they want to take and present their opinion in a short speech (3.5 minutes). It is their task to add new aspects to the debate. After that, the opposing side has 60 seconds to respond to the free speaker's arguments.
- The last speakers of each side perform their speech in reverse order (8) and (9) as can be seen in the picture. As the government has more work during the preparation phase, having to develop the motion, it receives the right of the final word.
- During each speech, participants are allowed to interject. The so-called points of information enliven the debate and point out weak arguments of the speaker. The first and last minute of a speech are protected. During that time, no interjections are allowed. The beginning and the end of the "unprotected speaking time" is signalled acoustically. Points of information during a speech are not allowed to exceed 15 seconds. The opposing fraction or a free speaker direct their points of information to the current speaker. The speaker



may decide within 30 seconds if he/she accepts the point of information or wishes to decline to answer.

Stage 6 / Winner:

There are a number of ways to select a winner.

- At audience-centred debates the listeners could be asked to decide by voting on "Who won?" or "Who delivered the best speech?". It is also possible to ask the audience for their opinion on the issue before and after debate and to select the winner based on the number of people that were convinced.
- In championships in the OPD format a jury evaluates the speeches according to criteria, such as matter, structure, method, and timing, by means of a point system. Furthermore, each team's strategy and team work are assessed. The winning team is then selected on the basis of the average rating.
- In the BP format, the emphasis is laid on the arguments. The jury weighs each argument up, compares the four teams against each other and selects the places 1 to 4. The jury must therefore be well trained and experienced. Bei Turnieren im Format OPD bewerten die Juroren die Reden nach Kriterien wie z. B. Argumentationsfülle, Aufbau, Auftreten und Zeiteinteilung anhand eines Punktesystems. Bei den Teams werden zusätzlich noch Strategie und Teamarbeit bewertet. Anhand des Punktedurchschnitts wird ein Siegerteam ermittelt.



Motions

Beginner

Homework should be banned.
School uniforms should be required.
All students should be required to perform one year of community service.
All parents should be required to attend parenting classes before having a child.
Single-sex schools are better for students.
Students should be held legally responsible for bullying in schools.
Cyberbullying that occurs outside of school, should be punished by the school.
All people should be vegetarians.
Renewable forms of energy should be subsidized by the government.
Grades should be abolished.
The voting age should be lowered.
The driving age should be raised.
Sharing music online should be allowed.
Trademark protection should be abolished.
Video games should be banned for underaged persons.
Smoking should be illegal.
People should be fined for not recycling.
Television is a bad influence.
Junk food should be banned in schools.

Advanced

Progressive tax rates are unfair.
Democracy is the best form of government.
All citizens who do not vote should pay a fine.
The death penalty should be abolished.
Animal testing should be banned.
Corporations should be allowed to donate money to political campaigns.
Torture is justified for national security.
Religious symbols should be banned from school.
Government should increase the minimum wage.

Challenging

The public should be able to pardon whistleblowers via referendum.
Nazi soldiers should not be portrayed as sympathetic and humanizing in popular media.

An infoslides gives additional context and background information needed to debate a motion. For pupils this is especially helpful for international relations' motions.



Background Information: Debate Club

Subject didactics and democratic pedagogy as an approach to the empowerment of responsible citizens

Getting to know Democratic Processes	<p>You can't just memorise democratic processes and values. It requires a mix of listening, convincing arguments, and a willingness to respond to one another for democratic processes to develop. Achieving an increasing interest in social topics and democracy requires a general understanding of economic and societal issues, but only by participating will a learning process be initiated.</p> <p>The debate club as "sporty" dispute provides a good forum for dialogue. Debate is a discussion that is governed by a fixed order. Both sides take turns to present their position in a speech for which they have limited time. When debating, you should make a point of referring to what the previous speaker has said. Questions and interjections are carefully controlled. Just before the debate begins, the topic is defined and the speakers are given a short time to prepare.</p>
Improving your Technical Argument Skills	<p>Participants of a debate club will experience that using reasoned argument when dealing with a topic is something they have to learn first but also something they can practice. Within a short period of time they will be able to notice an improvement. Students openly reveal their assumptions on a specific topic and critically question the arguments of their opponents. They will learn to structure the topic and will realise that – although they have some knowledge on the topic – it isn't always easy to formulate their arguments to make them sound good and to convey their message in a way that they are understood properly. Therefore, the debate club not only offers students a setting in which they can improve their rhetoric skills, but it will also especially help them to deepen their expertise in dealing with issues young people (should) have an opinion on.</p>
Contributing to an Open School Culture	<p>The debate club should not only take place once but should be a fixed component of the school life and offered on a regular basis. A debate club is especially exciting when organised in higher grades (e.g. a year before or during the school-leaving examination year) and when it ties in with questions from the fields of political economics, geography, economics or history – combined with current developments. It shows whether the students are able to use their knowledge on a topic to formulate specific ideas and arguments.</p>

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The Debate Club's Focus on Competences	<p>Expressing yourself precisely, clearly presenting your own point of view, knowing what your goals are, and being able to define and to verify how to get there, are what debating can teach you. Debating also teaches students to convince others with their arguments and to respond to and to rebut the arguments of their opponents.</p> <p>The skills debating can teach them therefore perfectly complement the knowledge they obtain in class. Knowledge has never before been so affordable and easily accessible as it is today. Therefore, it is even more important to be able to put it into context, correspondingly. Knowledge is the basis for statements and arguments.</p>
Technical Dimension	<p>Firstly, debating teaches the students technical skills which can come in handy for many other activities apart from holding a speech.</p> <p>Structure. The first thing new debaters are taught is to talk and think in a structured manner. A simple structure makes it easier for the audience to follow the speaker's train of thoughts and understand what he/she wants to say. But it is precisely this simple structure that poses a great challenge to many. It's all too tempting to jump from one topic to another, like you would do in your mind.</p> <p>Going about something in a structured way is beneficial for all kinds of actions, be it writing an essay, trying to solve mathematical or scientific problems or phrasing a short oral statement – giving the actions a structure makes them comprehensible and successful. To learn to arrange your own thoughts and words is a good reason to learn how to debate.</p> <p>Reasoning. Not only the speech should be well-structured but also each and every one of the arguments. Arguments are often based on assumptions or hypotheses. To identify and articulate these hypotheses is part and parcel of an argument. Starting from the hypotheses, correlations and causalities of the core statement are proven. Often it is not the causal links that are debated but the assumptions underlying the arguments. If a speaker is not able to identify as well as prove these hypotheses, he/she and his/her dialogue partner will keep talking at cross purposes.</p> <p>Furthermore, the speaker has to explain the causalities. Accuracy and a focus on the essential is just as important as an analysis lined with knowledge and significant examples. To be able to identify and prove the hypotheses as well as explain and analyse causalities is a good reason to learn how to debate.</p> <p>Goals. Often the speakers talk and think at cross purposes – not because they base their speeches on different hypotheses but because the goals are not clear or can't be conveyed. Reasoning is not only about explaining how something will be achieved but also what exactly will be accomplished. Debating also teaches students to clearly present their goals and to define why they chose them and – if applicable – why they were prioritised over others.</p> <p>To know your goals, to be able to give reasons for and balance them is a good reason to learn how to debate.</p>
Qualifications for Responsible Thinking.	<p>Secondly, debating provides the students with the qualifications needed for thinking responsibly as it is expected in a free society.</p>



Respect. When students constantly have to deal with opinions, arguments, and positions that are sometimes strongly divergent from their own viewpoint, they will learn to understand and be able to relate to them. Political discourses illustrate the danger of being stuck in a single world view and disregarding the opinions of others too hastily. This not only has a negative impact on democratic exchange but also affects the spirit of democracy.

Trying to put yourself in the position of others and arguing for opinions other than your own will not only help you understand the other side but also give you a better understanding of why you don't share this position. It is, again, a good reason to learn how to debate.

Values. Opinions and political positions don't just appear out of the blue – they are always based on a system of values. Even if not everybody has the same system of values, everybody's actions derive from a certain system of values.

You might have to discover it first, though. In many debates a strong focus is placed on arguing principles and values, which teaches the students how to deal with values. It enables them to identify, justify, and clarify their own values as well as to compare them to others. To be able to identify and defend your own value system is a good reason to learn how to debate.

Responsibility. If you are aware of your values, you can also question them. This includes moral values among others and the justification of one's words and actions. In order to be responsible, you have to be able to do the right thing, ethically, without external pressure. You have to grasp the concept of ethics and consequently act accordingly.

The constant challenge of questioning and justifying values improves your skills to think independently and is a good reason to learn how to debate.



Full Debate Example

Debates can play out in various ways. Below you find some subquestion or so called clashes which could come up for the motion: "School uniforms should be required"

Do uniforms create a desirable feeling of belonging somewhere?

Yes

Having all students wear the same uniform helps create a sense that you belong somewhere and maintain a good school either through culture or spirit. And by showing an even higher standard, expectations are soon raised and students will usually respond with better and more mature behavior. When the United States began to use uniforms in public school, there were many reports of behavior improvement.

No

School uniforms hamper original thinking in students. Everyone says that uniforms make students equal which will cause less bullying, but has anyone ever thought about people who are forced to wear certain items, such as a head scarf, to school? They will be pulled out of school at an earlier age if they do not follow the family's religious beliefs. Not only that, all kids should be given the freedom to choose what they like rather than wearing what they do not like. When they grow up, they will never be able to give their opinion on something, whatever it may be. When choosing clothing to wear to school, kids might take time to choose. At the same time they learn to think for themselves and to give their ideas to the world as they have done in school..

We all have a right to individuality, to make personal choices and to express our personality. This right of free expression includes the way we choose to dress. Making everyone wear the same school uniform infringes on (goes against) our rights and is a misuse of authority. The right to choose what to wear is particularly important for young people, who often have few other ways of expressing their personality or making choices about their lives.

Additionally, children may be laughed at by outsiders. Most kids absolutely hate uniforms.

Do school uniforms help to scrap social inequalities?

Yes

Only a few inner-city schools have had problems with children wearing "gang colours". Many of these have gotten rid of the problem not by introducing uniform, but by simply having a dress code which bans such

No

A uniforms is a social leveller - it makes all the children at a school equal no matter what their family background or income. If students can choose their own clothes, then the rich kids compete to show off their expensive designer

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gang clothes and symbols. In fact, uniforms boost a “gang state of mind” by marking children out and dividing students from different schools against each other. This can increase conflict between young people outside school, leading to bullying and violence.

labels and costly sneakers (trainers). Children from poorer families get picked on for not being able to afford lots of pricey outfits. Schools in the USA have used uniform to overcome the problem of students wearing “gang colours” if they were allowed to choose their own clothes. Clothes with particular colours or symbols marked rival groups of students out as linked to street gangs. This often led to fighting inside and outside the classroom. If everyone has to wear the same clothes to school, this problem is removed.

Do school uniforms improve children's' results?

No

There is no good evidence that links school uniform to improved results. A few schools in the USA reported better test scores after they started having uniform, but most of these made other changes to the running of the school which could have helped instead. Studies looking at lots of schools, with and without uniforms, have not found any link between what children wear and school results.

Yes

Schools with uniforms obtain better educational results. This is because there is better discipline and so the school setting makes learning easier. Without the distraction of checking out what all the other students are wearing (or how much flesh they are showing), students find it easier to concentrate and do better on tests.

Are uniforms practical?

Yes

Uniforms have practical advantages. Students don't have to waste time thinking what to wear at the start of each school day. The clothes are designed to be comfortable and safe, with no long trailing sleeves, skirts or hoods to catch on dangerous equipment in workshops or science lessons. Uniforms are also very helpful on trips as staff can quickly spot all the students from their school, keeping them out of trouble and making sure no one gets lost.

No

Uniforms are often not practical or pleasant to wear. Designs are often old-fashioned and ugly. Clothes that are designed to be worn by all shapes and sizes of student fit no one really well. For cheapness uniform items are often made of polycottons which are hot in warm weather but don't keep children properly warm in winter. Children in uncomfortable outfits are unlikely to learn much.

Can the introduction of school uniforms reduce crime and violence at schools?

Yes

Introducing uniforms can reduce crime in schools, especially violence and theft.

No

There is no proper research that shows that introducing uniforms cuts crime in schools.

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Headteachers at several US schools reported lower levels of violence and crime after uniforms were introduced. This is partly due to better discipline, but also because students no longer come to school wearing desirable designer clothes or \$100 trainers (sneakers). Uniforms also help make schools safer as they make intruders much easier to spot. Anyone not in uniform can easily be seen and reported.

Uniforms can actually lead to more violence, as they make students from rival schools much more obvious in the street or on the bus. "Us-and-them" feelings are made worse by uniform, and bullying and fighting between students from different schools can increase.

Do uniforms satisfy religious and cultural needs?

Yes

School uniform can satisfy religious and cultural needs. In areas with lots of children from different backgrounds (such as British cities) it is common to consult parents and the local community. For example, Muslim girls can be allowed to wear loose long trousers and tops in school colours, instead of the skirts or dresses worn by other female students.

No

Forcing children to wear uniforms can ignore their religious and cultural needs. For example, Sikh boys, Orthodox Jews and Islamic girls all express their religious beliefs through the way they dress, and uniforms stop them from doing this. In particular, school uniforms are often not modest enough in covering the female body to suit Muslims. Taking away this freedom of religious expression can also lead parents to choose private faith schools, limiting integration and the mixing of different cultures. When you make Islamic, and Sikh children wear uniforms, you violate their identity and their religious code.

Are school uniforms obsolete?

Yes

Very few countries feel the need to put most of their children in school uniforms. Mostly it is a British thing not shared by the rest of the world. Outside Britain, most schools with uniforms are private schools trying to set themselves apart from the state education system. Uniforms are almost unknown in European countries, yet their schools often have high standards of behaviour and learning. Until the 1990s uniforms were very rare in the USA. Since then, some US schools and districts have introduced uniforms, but the large majority of schools still do not have them. Some of those which did adopt uniform have since given up on it again.

No

School uniforms are a tradition worth keeping. In countries like Britain many schools have had uniforms for over a hundred years. The exact clothes can be updated with the times, but the overall look of the uniform provides a link with the school's past. Wearing it encourages pride in the school and sends out a good image to outsiders.

Debate Challenge B2

Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges



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Are uniforms a good value for the money?

Yes

Uniforms are usually cheaper than letting children choose what they will wear to school. Young people feel pressured to dress in the latest fashion and not to wear the same outfit often. This often leads their parents to spend hundreds of dollars on clothes each year. With uniforms taking away this pressure, there is usually a much smaller overall cost for the parents. Families who are hard-up can often get help with the cost of uniforms, or buy them second-hand. For these reason parents often like uniforms. At some schools it is parent groups that start campaigns to introduce them.

No

Uniforms are expensive and can be hard for parents to afford - it is like a tax on sending your child to school. After all, it is not as if children won't need other clothes too, for evenings, weekends and holidays. Special clothes like uniforms are only produced in small quantities, and so are more costly than normal clothes. Often, they can only be bought from one or two special shops, which also pushes the price up. The cost of uniforms often means that parents dislike them and can lead to a bad relationship between parents and the school.

Do school uniforms just represent an unnecessary rule?

Yes

Schools waste a lot of time trying to enforce uniform rules. Because children don't like wearing uniforms, they fight against it in many clever ways (e.g. shortening skirts, wearing non-regulation shoes and hosiery, tying their ties in funny ways, etc.). Schools in the US often allow parents an "opt-out" from uniforms, which means teachers have to check what list a child is on at the start of every lesson.

No

Students will always kick against the system, whatever that is. If there is a dress code instead of a uniform, they will try to bend those rules instead. For example, how short a skirt is too short? Are crop-tops allowed? What about hats or hoods which hide the student's face? Most problems of enforcing uniform rules in the USA are because uniforms are voluntary, or students are allowed an opt-out from it. If uniforms must be worn by everyone, there is much less confusion and enforcing the rules is quicker and simpler.



Are school uniforms better than just dress codes?

Yes

Having a uniform helps students and parents resist peer pressure. In schools with no uniforms, children may feel the need to dress in certain ways in order to fit in. This can often mean buying a lot of expensive and fashionable clothes that families cannot really afford. It can also mean girls being pressured into wearing skimpy clothes to try and look sexy at a very young age. It could even include Muslim girls feeling that they must wear a headscarf even though they don't want to.

No

Rather than introduce school uniform, why not have a dress code instead? This has all the benefits of uniforms without the many disadvantages. While uniforms force all children to wear the same clothes, dress codes give students a lot of choice of what to wear. Only a few unsuitable things are banned - for example, gang colours, very short skirts, crop-tops, bare shoulders, etc.

Are uniforms a beneficial preparation for future careers?

Yes

Wearing a uniform helps to prepare students for the world of work, where uniforms are often worn. People like nurses, soldiers, shop assistants, the police and railway staff wear uniforms as part of their job. Many other workers are expected to wear suits - really just a grown up sort of uniform, with little choice about it. Just like these adults, students should dress in uniform when they are in school, getting on with work. After all, students and adults can both change into their own casual clothes at the end of the work day, when they are "off duty".

No

Wearing a school uniform is not good preparation for working. Only a few jobs require uniforms, and many of these are low-paid service jobs - not what we want our young people to aim for. After all, their main role-models at school - the teachers - don't have to wear a uniform. Well-paid jobs used to require a suit, but this has been changing in recent years and smart-casual clothes are much more common now. Even if you have to wear a suit, you still have a huge choice of styles, colour and accessories with which to express your personality. This isn't true of school uniform.