



Debate  
Hub

# The Primary School Debating Course: A Guide





# How the Primary School Debating Course Works

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## **Lesson Types**

Throughout the course there are four different activities:

- 1) Games
- 2) Skill Work
- 3) Scaffolded (or Simplified) Debates
- 4) Competition Style Practice Debates

*Each of these are explained in this document*

The Primary School Debating Course is designed for you to mould to your students' needs. We have deliberately not numbered lessons as they can be adapted to your unique class. Some students, for example, will love competition style practice debates and want to do them every week from the very beginning while other groups will benefit from a lot of games to boost confidence and comfort in their speaking. Some may need scaffolded debates to prepare them for the more difficult competition-style practice debates.

We recommend your debate class takes place weekly for 45-75 minutes starting in Year 5, or the international equivalent. Make sure the students have debating notebooks to use when preparing for debates, judging and practising.

We also generally recommend starting your classes with one or two sessions of fun public speaking games to prove that debating need not be scary and to help the more shy students feel comfortable speaking out.

We would then alternate week to week between skill work and scaffolded debates for a month or two. Then, we would introduce competition style debates and start to alternate week to week between skill work and competition style practice debates.

Throughout the year, it is a good idea to use games as icebreakers or finishers. Debating should be something the students enjoy and, in our experience, they really look forward to their weekly sessions!





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## 1 Games

If your students might be shy speakers, a few weeks of speaking games, or just starting/finishing each class with a speaking game, can work wonders.

The games may seem simple or even silly, but they are all designed to break down students' fear of standing in front of the class and speaking, and many work on specific skills that are invaluable to strong competition debating. This course has two games packs: the first contains shorter, easier games and the second more challenging activities. Some of our skill work lesson plans have a recommended ice breaker game that works on a similar skill. Don't worry about using the same game twice. Students will have games they love to come back to.

### **Games Include:**

*Monster attack!*

*Is my story true?*

*If I could change one thing about the world...*

*Conspiracy!*

*Origin story*

*My amazing best friend*

## 2 Skill or Technique Learning

In these lessons you will work on a specific skill relevant to debating (like explaining ideas) for an hour with **lots** of practice. You could then choose to have a Competition-Style or Scaffold Debate at the end of the lesson or the next week to put that new skill into action. Our Skill Lessons are numbered as some skills do build on previous learning.

### **Skills worked on include:**

*Coming up with (more) points*

*Effective rebuttal*

*Using analogies*

*How to summarise*





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## 3 Scaffolded (or Simplified) Debates

To bridge the gap between skill practice and ‘proper’ debates, we have a series of what we loosely call scaffolded debates. These are designed to be easier or simpler than competition style. The aim is to build students’ confidence in debate settings so when you introduce competition style debates it is simply the next thing they are doing, not a big deal at all.

### **Scaffolded debates include:**

*Dragon’s den*

*Citizen’s assembly*

*Line debate*

## 4. Competition Style Practice Debates

The top of the mountain for primary school debating is to get students to the stage where they can thrive in a full, competition style debate. These can be difficult and at first students may struggle; many of them will only speak for 10 or 15 seconds before sitting back down! However, regular practice combined with skill work and scaffolds will get any class to the stage where they can take part in these styles of debates and hopefully take part in a junior school competition such as the ones Debate Hub run.

For a full guide on how to set up and run competition style practice debates see *“How to Set Up Competition Style Practice Debates”*.

Depending on the confidence of the students, you may be able to move into competition style practice debates very quickly. If this is the case for your class, you might find that as much as 70% of your lessons are competition style practice debates. When the students can do them, they tend to be fun, engaging, very educational and a great way to develop a multitude of skills.

If you are interested in running a competition either for your school or others, we also have a resource for that: *“How to Run a Junior School Debating Competition”*

