

Topics



Age category



15+

Group size



up to 30

Time



60 minutes

22 On two banks of the river

Topics: **critical thinking,**
media literacy

Recommended age group: 15+

Participants count: up to 30 participants

Activity duration: 60 minutes

Methods of education: group work, discussion, reflection

Aims of the activity:

- look for arguments in support of a certain claim in the media,
- use the arguments in the debate,
- identify argumentation mistakes
- try to take on the role of someone who has a different opinion
- pay attention to and respond to the arguments of others

Equipment:

- list of topics for participants, or the most frequently used arguments with the topics (prepared by the lecturer for his/her own needs),
- *handout* - a guide explaining the basic concepts for each of the groups (debate, argument, argumentation, digital media/argumentation mistakes, argument structure),
- writing utensils, computer or tablet for each group.

Keywords: discussion, argumentation, argumentation mistakes, digital media

Activity process:

1. Interest for the activity: There is no consensus on many topics. Even the most educated professionals may have a different perspective. They grew up in different environments, were and are surrounded by other people, have a different personality, different knowledge, interests, priorities, motivation and goals. Last but not least, they receive different information from different sources, which they process individually. It is therefore necessary to look at issues that affect society from different perspectives and try to understand the position of others.

2. We will introduce the participants to the activity that awaits them: *The following activity can be an opportunity for you to understand others. You will work in groups (in pairs or triplets). One pair of groups will choose one of the 10 topics to discuss. However, the exchange of views on a contentious issue will be hampered by the fact*

that you cannot choose a “for” or “against” position, but it will be assigned to you. The facilitator will form pairs of groups (group A and group B) that will have the same topic so that they can meet in a discussion after preparation. Group A will hold a “for” position and Group B a “against” position. The topic is either chosen by the lecturer or left to the participants.

3. Assign the task to the groups: *In the next 20 minutes, prepare for the discussion by selecting arguments for the position you are holding. However, these should not be your reasons for supporting the position, but the arguments that are most often made in digital media.* It is possible that some participants will personally hold the opposite position than the one assigned to them. In that case, the formulation of arguments and their subsequent presentation in the debate will be more difficult. However, this is an argumentation exercise that allows a different view and will be all the more beneficial. After writing the arguments supporting the position, there will be a discussion (argumentation exercise).

Before starting the work in groups, we check whether the participants understand the basic concepts: *argument, argumentation, argumentative mistakes, digital media.* If not, the terms need to be explained or at least given into groups as handouts (section 3.2 of the (Un) safely in the net manual). One or two groups (according to the number of groups created) will be given the *handout* about the argument structure and the most frequently used argumentation mistakes (section 3.2 of the (Un) Safely in the Net) and a special task: *During the discussion you will monitor the arguments used to see if there are argumentative mistakes. While searching for arguments by groups, you can become familiar with the theory and argumentation mistakes.*

4. The subsequent discussion can take place in several ways:

- a) One on one; others observe the discussion (better implemented in a smaller team): Each group shall choose one representative to represent them. Selected students lead a discussion and provide arguments to support a “given” opinion *for* or *against*. They have 5 minutes to exchange their views.
- b) Facilitated discussion of individuals or groups: participants have a dedicated time during which they can speak. Each group (its member) speaks first for two minutes, then every minute, and finally for 30 seconds. The debate is facilitated by the lecturer.
- c) The lecturer calls one or the other side as needed.

Tips for leading the activity: It is important to be able to accept the other party’s arguments and the ability to react well - not to win a discussion! Emphasis on this idea is very important for the participants’ further attitude to the discussions, whether competitive or in everyday life. Discussion is important as it is a process during which the opinions of discussing and listening individuals are formed, not as a result of one side standing victorious and the other defeated.

5. At the end of the discussion, the groups entrusted with this task give *feedback*. They will evaluate the structure of the arguments used and the argumentation mistakes. They can add other interesting things that they noticed during the discussion (who formulated the arguments well, who was involved, whether the reactions were factual, etc.). If appropriate, the feedback will be completed by the lecturer, or he can recommend how to improve the argumentation and discussion.

Examples of topics for discussion:

- Pupils should be banned from mobile phones in schools.
- Pupils should be able to choose what they want to study according to what they enjoy.
- Globalization benefits everyone.
- Smoking in bars should be allowed.
- Marijuana should be legalized.
- Vegetarianism is nonsense.
- Man has no influence on climate change.
- The refugee crisis can be solved only by closing borders.

