

Public Speaking: Impromptu Debate Activity

Procedure for impromptu debate:

1. Pair students up with partners. Pass out a topic for each pair of partners. One will be “pro” and one will be “con” (students can submit topic ideas or choose a topic).
2. Explain to students that they will have to create a brief argument on their assigned topic (they should create an outline that they can speak from) that includes:
 - a. a definition/explanation of the topic and their position;
 - b. an example or two that supports their position;
 - c. an argument that defeats their opponent’s position[These steps should have received prior explanation and examples.]
3. After students have been given 5 minutes to prepare, have each pair come to the front of the class to share their debate. Pro then Con. Standing side by side facing front.
4. After each student has presented their side, they are allowed to ask each other one question (cross-examination) and present a 15 - 30 second conclusion. (Pro first then con.)
5. Debates should be no longer than two - three minutes.
6. At the end of each debate, have students vote on which side won. Ask students to share their reasoning for choosing (or write it down).

Assessment for impromptu debate:

Did the student have a clear example?	(+)	(-)
Did student stay on topic?	(+)	(-)
Did student make a valid argument against the opposing side?	(+)	(-)
Did the student effectively answer the question that they were asked?	(+)	(-)

Sample Topics for Impromptu Debate:

Should cell phones be used for activities in classrooms?
Have parents become too involved in their children’s education and sports?
Should college athletes be paid?
Do curfews keep students out of trouble?
Do violent video games cause behavioral problems?
Does participation in sports or extra-curricular activities help with academics?
Should there be dress codes in schools?
Should teachers be allowed to carry guns?