



Teacher's page

Fun lesson plans from Learn Hot English

How to win an argument!

Level: Upper Intermediate (B2) to Advanced (C1)

Audio: Yes

In this fun lesson, your students will find out how to win an argument. This practical class will get your students using lots of useful language and all the essential skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Here are some ideas for doing it in class. Good luck!



1 Warm-up

False arguments – scroll down for the student Resource pages

In pairs or individually, students read over the “false arguments” (also known as “logical fallacies”). They decide what’s wrong with them. Then, when they’re ready, go over them as a class and see if you can agree. Students who finish early can write some more false arguments.

2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities. You could do this lesson as a **listening** activity. In order to do this, tell your students to turn over the sheet so they can’t see the text as they do the exercises.

Remember, for the first listening you should play the recording once without stopping so students get the gist of it.

For the second listening, if your students’ listening level is low, stop the recording after each paragraph and check their understanding.

After finishing that, and if you’ve done this as a listening activity (not a reading), let your students read the text as you play the recording again. This is good for developing their listening skills as they can see the connection between the written and spoken language.

3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

Assign a paragraph (or paragraphs) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible. This works well in pairs, with you monitoring the language.

False argument creation

In pairs or individually, students create 3 false arguments similar to the ones in the warm-up activity. When they're ready, they exchange false arguments with another pair or student. Then, they try to dismantle each other's false arguments.

Dialogue

In pairs, students write up notes for a dialogue between two people, one of whom is using a lot of false arguments. Students could use the false arguments they created in the previous activity. Tell your students to make the dialogue as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to act out their dialogues (from memory or by using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones. Or, students could also film the dialogues on a smartphone then show it to the class.

False arguments

See the Resource Sheet below.

Discussion on debating & arguing

See the discussion Resource Sheet questions below.

Speed arguments!

Print off the debating statements below (or any others) on little slips of paper or cards. Make enough sets for pairs of students in your class. Then, put your students into pairs. Give each pair a set of the debating cards face down. Before starting, students choose to be either "YES" or "NO". Those who are "YES" must agree with the statement (even if they don't in real life); and those who are "NO" disagree with it. On the word go, students turn over a card to reveal a debating statement. Then, they have 30 seconds to decide what they're going to say. This could be a logical or illogical argument – it doesn't matter. When the 30 seconds is up, they have to argue over the issue for 2 minutes. Once the 2 minutes is up, they turn over another card and repeat the process. Carry on for as long as possible. Tell your students to argue as "aggressively" as they want – the more passion, the better! When they've finished, bring the class back together and ask for any ideas students had on the issues, or for a pair to recreate one of their "heated" arguments.





Student's page

How to win an argument!

Level: Upper Intermediate (B2) to Advanced (C1)

1 Warm-up

False arguments

Read over the “false arguments” (also known as “logical fallacies”) below. Decide what’s wrong with them. Then, when you’re ready, discuss your ideas with a partner or in small groups and see if you can agree. For example:

Argument: “**Joe lives in a big building, so his apartment must be huge.**”

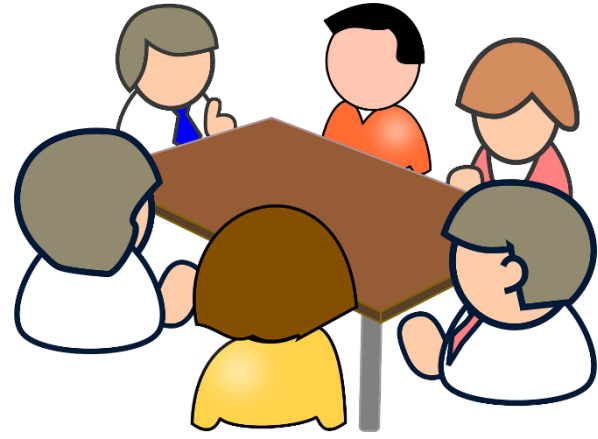
Argument deconstruction: ***Just because Joe lives in a big building, it doesn’t mean that his own apartment will be big.***



- Joe lives in a big building, so his apartment must be huge.
- Once all gun-owners have registered their firearms, the government will know exactly who to confiscate them from.
- If we legalise marijuana, next thing you know we're legalising heroin!
- The Ford F-150 is the best-selling truck in America, therefore it is the best truck.
- More people prefer the taste of Pepsi to Coca-Cola and therefore Pepsi is better than Coca-Cola.
- Since no real evidence has been collected of UFOs, they can't exist.
- Scientists don't know exactly what happened in the Big Bang, so it can't be true.
- Thousands of Americans have seen lights in the night sky which they couldn't identify. This proves the existence of life on other planets.
- The customer's internet is slow and he's using a PC (not a Mac), so it must be a problem with PCs.
- Atmospheric CO2 levels and drug use have both increased steadily since the 1960s. Therefore, carbon dioxide causes people to use drugs.
- When people buy more water at the park on a sunny day they also buy more ice cream. So, ice cream must make people thirsty.

Debating topics

Choose one of these topics then have a debate with a partner or in small groups. Spend a few minutes preparing your arguments first.



- Terminally ill patients should have a right to end their life.
- There should be an upper age limit of 75 years old for driving.
- The minimum age limit for starting to drive should be lowered to 16.
- There should be a restriction on how many children a family can have.
- Hate groups should be allowed to post their messages of hate on social media.
- News reports shouldn't show or mention the identities of mass shooters or terrorists.
- Stem cell research should be publicly funded.
- There should be an age limit on when children can have mobile phones.
- There should be a limit on how many pets you can own.
- Beggars should be fined if they're caught lying about their situation to get money.
- Marijuana should be legalised.
- Pharmaceutical companies or doctors should be required to pay for the treatment of those who get addicted to their medication.
- Universal health care should be a basic human right.
- Obese people should be charged an "obesity" tax for travelling on all forms of transport – public or private.
- People who smoke or drink heavily should have to pay for any medical attention, treatment or operations.
- Mobile phones should be banned in the classroom.
- All schools should require pupils to wear uniforms.
- All public universities should be free.
- Primary and secondary schools should ban the sale of junk food.

- Any treasure you find in your property or garden should be given to the state.
- Teachers should be paid the same as doctors or lawyers.
- Homework should be banned for primary school children.
- Schools should replace teachers with robots or AI (artificial intelligence) technology.
- Schools should be year-round and only have 4 weeks' holiday in total.
- All guns in private hands should be banned.
- Convicted felons shouldn't be allowed to vote.
- Prisoners should be forced to do unpaid work while in prison.
- Prisons should be allowed to go private.
- Social media platforms should be responsible for any fake news that is posted on their site.
- Mobile phone companies should be allowed to track your movements.
- Driverless vehicles should be allowed on the same road as manual drivers.
- Parents should be allowed to micro-chip their children.
- Governments should be allowed to spy on your internet activities as part of their counter-terrorism measures.
- You should be forced to return money if an ATM gives you too much.
- Every retailer should accept a payment of bitcoin.
- Companies should be forced to label products as GMOs (genetically modified organisms).
- Governments should promote plant-based diets over meat-based ones.
- Sugary products should be taxed at a higher rate.



- Citizens should be allowed to sue any politicians who act against climate change measures, or who don't protect the environment.
- All restaurants should be required to say how many calories there are in the food they serve.
- The sale of palm oil should be banned.
- Renewable energy firms should receive subsidies.

Discussion: debates & arguments

Discuss these questions in pairs.

- When was the last time you argued with someone in your family? What did you argue about? What was your position? What was your "opponent's" position? Who "won" the argument? How do you know?
- When was the last time you argued with someone at work? What did you argue about? What was your position? What was your "opponent's" position? Who "won" the argument? How do you know?
- When was the last time you argued with someone in a public place: a hotel, a restaurant, a shop...? What did you argue about? What was your position? What was your "opponent's" position? Who "won" the argument? How do you know?
- When was the last time you argued with someone at school? What did you argue about? What was your position? What was your "opponent's" position? Who "won" the argument? How do you know?
- When was the last time you argued with a friend? What did you argue about? What was your position? What was your "opponent's" position? Who "won" the argument? How do you know?
- When was the last time you spoke out about something? What was it? Who were you talking to? How were your comments received (positively, negatively, angrily...)?
- What are your top tips for winning an argument?



Objective To improve your listening and reading skills.

Think about it How often do you argue? Do you ever argue at work? Who with? What about? What do you argue about at home? Have you ever had an argument with a superior? What was it about? When was the last time you saw two people arguing? What were they arguing about? Who was arguing? How angry were they?

Exams This activity will help prepare you for English exams such as CAE, IELTS and TOEFL.

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I'M DEFINITELY WINNING!

“I’m not arguing, I’m just explaining why I’m correct!” How to win an argument!

What’s the best way to win an argument? Here are our top tips.

Preparation: do your research and make sure you’ve got all the facts and figures **at your fingertips**. Also, work out what you think the other person will say so you can **counter** their arguments.

Clarity: lay out your points clearly and with examples. Don’t make generalisations such as “you always spend hours in the bathroom” because your opponent will think of a time when they didn’t, and then you’ll lose that argument. Instead, be specific and say, “You spent over 20 minutes in the bathroom this morning.”

Listen: listen carefully to your opponent and ask lots of questions to get them talking. As they’re chatting away, you may notice **flaws** in their argument. Also, ask questions, such as “What would that entail?” or “How would that work?” so your opponent is forced to go through their idea step by step.

Watch out for the following **logical fallacies** – things that sound reasonable but which are actually flawed or dishonest.

The correlation-causation confusion: this is when your opponent confuses **correlation** (or **coincidence**) with **causality**. For example, since the 1950s, both CO² levels and obesity levels

have increased sharply. But does this mean that atmospheric CO² has caused obesity? Of course not – it’s just a coincidence.

The straw man: your opponent simplifies your argument, then argues against the simplified version. For example, imagine you propose reducing defence spending. Your opponent then argues that cutting defence funding will leave the country **defenceless**, and then proceeds to argue against leaving the country defenceless, ignoring your original arguments for decreasing defence spending.

The ad populum fallacy: this is when your opponent bases their argument on the fact that everyone does something so it must be the “right” thing to do. For example, “Most smokers think we should be able to smoke in public places. Therefore, smoking in public places is a good idea.”

The false dilemma: your opponent builds an argument on the basis that there are only limited choices or outcomes when actually there could be several. For example, they could say, “Either we buy the new system or the business will **go bust**.” Clearly that isn’t the only option.

The red herring: this is when your opponent introduces something that isn’t directly related to the subject in an attempt to deflect attention, confuse

you or change the topic of conversation. For example, imagine you catch someone cheating in an exam, and they say, “OK, I admit I was cheating, but everyone else has been cheating too.” In this case, your opponent is trying to divert attention away from him/herself.

The slippery slope: your opponent claims that if A happens, it’ll lead to B, and when that happens it’ll lead to C and then D. For example: “If we introduce restrictions on who can buy guns, the government will take away our rights.” Of course, it isn’t necessarily true that one thing will naturally lead to another.

Are you ready for an argument? ✪

VIDEO

YouTube

Watch an argument from the TV series Friends. Search YouTube for “Friends-Ross and Rachel arguing about the baby”.

GLOSSARY

at your fingertips *exp*
something that’s “at your fingertips” is close to you and you can use it easily

to counter *vb*
if you “counter” what someone has said, you give the opposite arguments

a flaw *n*
a “flaw” in an argument is a mistake in it

a logical fallacy *n*
an idea which people think is true but which is actually false or incorrect

a correlation *n*
a “correlation” between things is a connection between them

a coincidence *n*
when there’s a “coincidence”, two or more events happen at the same time by chance (by luck)

causality *n*
the relationship between cause and effect

defenceless *adj*
if a country is “defenceless”, it can’t defend itself

to go bust *exp*
if a business “goes bust”, it stops operating because there’s no more money

Answers on page 44

1 Reading I

What are your top tips for winning an argument? Make notes. Then, read the article once to compare your ideas.

2 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, write a brief explanation of the following things without referring back to the article.

1. The correlation-causation confusion =
2. The straw man =
3. The ad populum fallacy =
4. The false dilemma =
5. The red herring =
6. The slippery slope =