

Arguments and Debates

Warm up

- What are some topics that people often argue about?
- How do you react to conflict? Do you think you're good at dealing with it?
- Do you ever watch political debates? Why or why not?
- When was the last time you had an argument? What was it about?
- Do you think you would find it difficult to have an argument in English?
- Have you ever had a job that involved a lot of conflict? What was it?



Pet Hates

The idiom “pet hate” means something that irritates you a lot. It usually implies that this thing irritates you more than it irritates most other people.

Eg. *“One of my biggest pet hates is when people talk in the cinema, it drives me nuts!”*



1. Pairwork: think of a pet hate you have and tell it to your partner. Listen to your partner's pet hate and have a discussion with them about it.

One of my biggest pet hates is.....




2. Pairwork: Look at some of the common things that happen in an argument and discuss them. Are they pet hates, or do you not mind them? Can you think of any examples of them from your own life?

- People talking over the top of others.
- People who get defensive if you correct them.
- People talking down to others or being condescending.
- People who hold a grudge for too long.
- People who snap at others for no good reason.
- People who are passive aggressive.

 **3. Listen to the argument between Kimberly and Tristan and answer the questions.**

- a) Why is Kimberly so irritated?
- b) Why does Tristan think what happens in America is important?
- c) What does Kimberly think Tristan talks down to her about?
- d) What does Tristan pretend to be interested in?
- e) What did they ban in American political debates?
- f) What do you think of the behaviour of Tristan and Kimberly? Who do you agree with more?



 **4. The argument from exercise 3 contains the phrases below. Match the phrases to their meanings. If you are not sure of the meaning, you can listen to the audio again and try to figure it out using the context of the phrase.**

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|---|--|
| a) I beg to differ | 1. Is this a joke? |
| b) Are you kidding me? | 2. Go ahead / help yourself. |
| c) Not to mention | 3. We will never agree, so let's move on. |
| d) Let's agree to disagree | 4. Please don't misunderstand me. |
| e) Look who's talking | 5. In addition to (used to reinforce a point). |
| f) To make a mountain out of a molehill | 6. I disagree. |
| g) Be my guest | 7. To make a small issue into a big one. |
| h) Don't get me wrong | 8. You are guilty of the thing you are accusing others of. |



5. There are a lot of sneaky or “dirty” tactics that can be used to get an advantage in an argument or debate. Read about some of these tactics below and see if you can think of any examples of these from the real world.

Loaded Questions

Loaded questions are questions which attempt to force an argument or assumption into a debate by sneaking the assumption into the question. Loaded questions often present a false dilemma.

The Straw Man Argument

A straw man argument is when one person states what their opponent’s stance on a matter is, (changing or misrepresenting what their stance *actually* is), and then destroys the “straw man” argument.



Cherry-picking

Cherry-Picking is the act of selectively presenting only the evidence that confirms your point of view, while actively ignoring evidence that contradicts it.

Red Herrings

A red herring is when a person introduces an idea or topic into the debate in order to distract attention away from the main issue.


Gaslighting

Gaslighting is the act of psychological manipulation in which one person tries to make another question or doubt their own sanity or perceptions. This is often done by manipulating facts, denying or warping past events, or outright lying in order to create a sense of confusion or uncertainty.




6. Read through the statements and see if you can match them to the “dirty tactics” above.

- “My opponent believes that businesses should rule everything, and that money and the economy come before everything, even human rights. Let me tell you why he’s wrong.”
- “I don’t understand it, why would you want to vote for someone who lies all the time?”
- “You told me weeks ago that I could use your credit card to pay for my vacation! Do you really think I’d make that up? It drives me crazy when you forget things like this.”
- “Climate change is a myth, there is a scientific study that says so. You need to do your own research and stop believing all these so-called “climate scientists.”
- “Oh you think you’re disadvantaged because you’re a woman? There are women all over the world who have it much worse than you. Do you know how bad it is to live in true poverty?”


 **7. The day after the argument Kimberly and Tristan want to make up. Listen to the conversation and answer the questions.**

- a) Why does Kimberly think Tristan and her are so irritable recently?
- b) Why is Kimberly sensitive about people talking down to her?
- c) What does Kimberly apologize for, and what does Tristan apologize for?
- d) How do you think Tristan really feels about interior decoration?
- e) What do you think of the conversation? Do you think this is a couple who are good at making up?



 **8. The argument from exercise 3 contains the phrases below. Match the phrases to their meanings. If you are not sure of the meaning, you can listen to the audio again and try to figure it out using the context of the phrase.**

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| a) At the drop of a hat | 1. To be quick to anger |
| b) The feeling is mutual | 2. Very quickly or easily |
| c) No offense | 3. To watch or be mindful |
| d) To have a chip on one's shoulder | 4. I don't want to upset you |
| e) To get sidetracked | 5. This is in the past and not an issue now |
| f) To keep an eye on something | 6. I feel the same way |
| g) Water under the bridge | 7. To get distracted by another subject |
| h) In the heat of the moment | 8. A time in which one is temporarily too angry or excited to think and make sensible choices. |

 9. Pairwork: read through the questions below and practice debating and disagreeing with each other. Feel free to “play devil’s advocate” and disagree for the sake of disagreeing.

- Should schools teach emotional intelligence as part of the curriculum?
- Is capital punishment morally justifiable?
- Is cultural appropriation a legitimate concern or an overblown issue?
- Is there a need for a men’s rights movement alongside the feminist movement?
- Is A.I more of a threat or a benefit to mankind?
- Should your country raise taxes on large corporations?
- Should euthanasia be legalized?
- Should people be required to take drug tests in order to receive unemployment payments?
- Will cryptocurrency replace actual currency?