

## 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? *Because she doesn't want to hear about America anymore.*
- b) Why does Tristan think what happens in America is important? *Because the US economy affects the rest of the world, US laws regarding the internet change how the net works in the rest of the world, and because if America goes to war it changes the world.*
- c) What does Kimberly think Tristan talks down to her about? *American politics*
- d) What does Tristan pretend to be interested in? *Interior decoration*
- e) What did they ban in American political debates? *Interrupting other candidates*
- 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 <b>6</b>                      | 1. Is this a joke?   |
| b) Are you kidding me? <b>1</b>                  | 2. Go ahead / help yourself.                               |
| c) Not to mention <b>5</b>                       | 3. We will never agree, so let's move on.                  |
| d) Let's agree to disagree <b>3</b>              | 4. Please don't misunderstand me.                          |
| e) Look who's talking <b>8</b>                   | 5. In addition to (used to reinforce a point).             |
| f) To make a mountain out of a molehill <b>7</b> | 6. I disagree.   |
| g) Be my guest <b>2</b>                          | 7. To make a small issue into a big one.                   |
| h) Don't get me wrong <b>4</b>                   | 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.”  
*Straw man*
- “I don’t understand it, why would you want to vote for someone who lies all the time?”  
*Leading question*
- “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.”  
*Gaslighting*
- “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.” *Cherry picking*
- “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?” *Red herring*


 **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? *They moved in together recently, and are used to having more space*
- b) Why is Kimberly sensitive about people talking down to her? *Because her old boss used to do that*
- c) What does Kimberly apologize for, and what does Tristan apologize for? *Tristan apologizes for talking down to her, and Kimberly apologizes for snapping at him and talking over him.*
- d) How do you think Tristan really feels about interior decoration? *There is no right or wrong answer, but given his tone of voice at the end of the conversation, it's unlikely that he likes it.*
- 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 <b>2</b>             | 1. To be quick to anger  |
| b) The feeling is mutual <b>6</b>            | 2. Very quickly or easily  |
| c) No offense <b>4</b>                       | 3. To watch or be mindful  |
| d) To have a chip on one's shoulder <b>1</b> | 4. I don't want to upset you   |
| e) To get sidetracked <b>7</b>               | 5. This is in the past and not an issue now  |
| f) To keep an eye on something <b>3</b>      | 6. I feel the same way   |
| g) Water under the bridge <b>5</b>           | 7. To get distracted by another subject  |
| h) In the heat of the moment <b>8</b>        | 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?

#### Audio Transcript 1

*Tristan: Hey did you hear about what they’re doing in the American political debates? The candidates kept interrupting each other, and now they’re going to ban-*

*Kimberly: Oh my god, I’m sorry but I’m so sick of hearing about America all the time.*

*Tristan: Ummm ok, nevermind then I guess.*

*Kimberly: I’m sorry why is everyone so obsessed with what happens in America? It doesn’t affect you in the slightest.*

*Tristan: I beg to differ. What happens in America affects the rest of the world.*

*Kimberly: We’ll have to agree to disagree on that. I don’t feel like what happens in America affects me at all.*

*Tristan: Are you kidding me? If the American economy goes bust, the rest of the world goes down too. If America makes a law about how the internet works, it changes how the net works in the rest of the world because most tech companies are in America. Not to mention what happens if America goes to war.*

Kimberly: Sure, don't get me wrong, those things are all important... but were you about to tell me about any of those things?

Tristan: Well... no, but you don't have to snap at me, I was just trying to make small talk.

Kimberly: You're making mountain out of a molehill, I was just being honest about how I feel.

Tristan: Oh well in that case it should be fine for me to tell you how I feel?

Kimberly: Be my guest.

Tristan: I hate it when you talk down to me like this. All I was trying to do was tell you a funny fact, and you have to treat me like an idiot for it.

Kimberly: Talk down to you? Look who's talking, every time I talk to you, you explain world politics to me like I'm 12 years old.

Tristan: Well you told me yourself you don't know anything about politics!

Kimberly: And did it occur to you that that's because I don't care about politics??

Tristan: I'm just trying talk with you about something that I find interesting. Couldn't you at least pretend to be interested?

Kimberly: Oh please, why should I pretend to be interested?

Tristan: Because that's how this works! Do you think I actually care about interior decoration?

Kimberly: Wait you don't care about interior decoration? We spent 2 hours yesterday talking about sofas.

Tristan: And I was bored out of my mind the whole time. I couldn't care less about it, but I pretend-

Kimberly: I thought you loved it.

Tristan: That's another thing, you always talk over the top of me. I hate it when you do that.

Kimberly: (long silence) fine.... What were you saying about America?

Tristan: They banned political candidates from talking over each other in political debates.

Kimberly: Oh.

Tristan: Yeah.

### Audio 2 Transcript

Kimberly: So... are we going to talk about yesterday?

Tristan: Sure... I mean it got pretty heated. We've been arguing a lot recently.

Kimberly: Yeah we have. Both of us seem to get angry at the drop of a hat. I think it's because we moved in together recently.

Tristan: Yeah that's true. I think we're both just used to having our space.

*Kimberly: Yeah I really underestimated how much I'd miss that. Anyway, I think I owe you an apology. I feel terrible about yesterday.*

*Tristan: The feeling is mutual. I shouldn't get so worked up about politics.*

*Kimberly: Honestly I don't think politics was really the issue. I do have a habit of talking over the top of you. It's just... well no offense, but you can be a bit condescending when you talk about politics. And I kind of have a chip on my shoulder when it comes to people talking down to me. My boss used to do it all the time.*

*Tristan: That's... an interesting apology.*

*Kimberly: But it's true Tristan, especially when you talk about American politics, I just... Ok I'm getting sidetracked. The point is I need to not snap at you and talk over the top of you so much.*

*Tristan: Ok, I'd appreciate that. And I can see what you mean about talking down to you, I guess I could keep an eye out for that in the future.*

*Kimberly: Thanks... so we're good then?*

*Tristan: Water under the bridge.*

*Kimberly: One more thing... do you really not care about interior decoration?*

*Tristan: In the heat of the moment I may have exaggerated how boring I find it... I actually quite like it now. Although it bored me senseless when we first met.*

*Kimberly: Good, because I wanted to ask your opinion on this sofa I found online.*