

# Debates: the Skill of Friendly Argument

According to the dictionary, debating is a verb meaning “argue about (a subject), especially in a formal manner. (Google)” For the purposes of the dictionary, that definition is perfectly fine. But if you’ve ever seen a debate, you would know that **debates are a lot more than that**. It is a means for people to passionately express their opinion while not only having it taken in stride, but also encouraged. It is a means for people to appreciate someone else’s opinion as well as their own. It is a means for people to have a friendly argument while learning more about their opponent’s point of view. And best of all, it is a means for people to have friendly competition with no hard feelings afterward.

Though you may not recognize it immediately, debating happens all the time: on the news, in classrooms, among friends and family- it just usually isn’t in good spirits. In the public speaking world, debates are organized much more formally and participants tend to prepare extensively ahead of time, though occasionally there are impromptu debates. There are many opportunities to participate in debates: you might attend one in a Gavel or Toastmasters club, a teacher may assign one in school (especially in the upper grades), or you could even organize one for fun with your friends. Not only are debates easy to participate in, but they also come with many benefits. Here are the top 5 benefits to debating:

1. **Critical Thinking Skills.** In a debate, accusations and explanations fly between the two oppositions, back and forth like the birdie in a professional game of badminton. To the audience, the sides may look like they conjure these brilliant points and responses out of thin air, but really, each person is racking their brains

desperately to come up with each statement. Eventually, after a lot of experience, it just takes less time to think on your feet. In the end, debates are a great exercise for your brain (especially in impromptu speaking).

2. **Communication.** By participating in debates, you will develop your communication / public speaking skills. In order to do well in a debate you need to rapidly express your ideas in the most persuasive way possible. This skill can come in handy any other time you need to convince somebody of something.
3. **Socialization.** Through debates, you can meet a lot of new people and learn a lot about them, even if they aren't on your side during the debate. You might even learn some tips and secrets from your fellow debaters! Just make sure to mind your manners and stay respectful throughout the debate, and you'll make new connections in no time!
4. **Confidence.** After you deliver a spectacular response or an incredible defense, that boost of confidence you feel isn't as temporary as it seems. Debating is great for developing a sense of self-confidence.
5. **Manners.** By learning to control your manners throughout the debate, your manners may be improved in other areas of life as well. In fact, the next time you argue with somebody, you'll know just how to get your point across respectfully but efficiently.
6. **Fun.** Debating might be stressful at first (thinking so fast isn't easy!) but after one gets the hang of it, the thrill of it all might please you! And you may realize it is more fun that you realized.

So, try debating sometime! You never know, you might enjoy it! And at the very least, you'll learn something new