

Four Corners Debate



OIB Annual H/G Subject Meeting, October 2021

CIEP de Sèvres

Potential Uses of Four Corners Debate

- As a warm-up before studying a new theme
- As a follow-up for students to apply what they have learned about a theme
- As a pre-writing exercise which helps students to refine their arguments before writing
- As a revision exercise to consolidate knowledge
- As a post-teaching resource (see sticky notes twist)

Analytical and Presentation Skills mobilized during Four Corner Debates

- Students practice considering different points of view
- Students learn to express their opinions
- Students work collectively in groups in an effort to clearly verbalize their positions
- Students practice listening skills
- Follow-up activities can help students reflect on which techniques and arguments were the most persuasive and why

Icing on the Cake Advantage

**All students have a chance to
actively participate!!!**

How to Set Up a Four Corners Debate

1. Post 4 large pieces of paper in the four corners of the classroom with these words written on them:

Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree,
Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree

2. Write a controversial statement on the board (for example: “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.”)

3. Have students move to the corner that best matches their position (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree). .

4. Each corner will have 2 minutes to discuss and solidify their reasoning/logic. Two formats are possible for the debate:

- More structured format: Each group selects a spokesperson to express the group’s position. He/she has 30 seconds to express thoughts concisely and persuade their classmates. Other groups must listen intently.
- More ‘street fight’ style: debaters have to jump into the middle of the circle and seize the debate floor. This gives a more rapid, spontaneous debate. The downside is that it can be intimidating for the less confident debater.

5. After the first corner presents, invite those who have been persuaded to move to the appropriate corner. Direct each group to present their group’s position in turn. For ‘street fight’ debates, you can inform students in advance that they can change corners at any time during the debate if their analysis and opinion evolves as the debate unfolds.

Twist on Four Corners Debate Format

- As a twist on the debate strategy, give all students a sticky note for them to record their opinion or a fact which supports their opinion. When they move to the corner of the room that best represents their individual opinion, each student can place the post-it note on the poster. This records how the students voted for future discussion and gives a visual support for consolidating arguments and knowledge.
- This twist is especially useful for revisions before exams or for pre-writing consolidation of knowledge.

Quotes to Fuel Controversy

(Theme 1 chapter 1/2)

- People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people.
 - Alan Moore, V for Vendetta
- Democracy is beautiful in theory; in practice it is a fallacy.
 - Benito Mussolini
- It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.
 - Winston Churchill
- Liberal capitalism is not perfect, but compared to the other 'isms,' it's far superior.
 - Ayaan Hirsi Ali
- Capitalism is, fundamentally, an economic system that promotes inequality.
 - Annalee Newitz
- Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone.
 - John Maynard Keynes

Resources

- <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/your-corners>
- <https://teachnthrive.com/teaching-ideas/4-corners-debate/>
- <https://www.thoughtco.com/informal-debate-4-corners-strategy-8040>