

LESSON 14

For and Against: a Digital Technology Debate

40 minutes

Behind the Content

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Debate whether social media does more good than harm for people your age. Present the strongest arguments on both sides, place yourself on an opinion line, and notice if hearing both views shifts your position.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Debate the advantages and disadvantages of digital technologies and social media for young people.
- Steelman the strongest arguments from both sides of a debate.
- Weigh both cases fairly and reflect on any shifts in personal views.

BEFORE THE BELL

- Arrange seating to allow for two debate groups and an opinion line space.
- Have the opinion-line interactive ready on the teacher device for the starting map and the second placement after the debate.

For and Against: a Digital Technology Debate

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

4 min	introduction	Start
5 min	content	Examine and Discuss
6 min	activity	Hands-on: Take Your Stand
16 min	content	Hands-on: Argue Both Sides
6 min	activity	Make Sense
2 min	content	Reflect
1 min	summary	What You Covered

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Start. Read the motion and name the skill: arguing and weighing well, not winning. Do not hint at a preferred answer. Keep it to a minute and move on.
- 2. Examine and Discuss. Read the motion aloud twice and have a student restate it. Model one steelman sentence yourself. If asked your view, deflect: what is the strongest point you have heard? Cap at five minutes.
- 3. Hands-on: Take Your Stand. Run the line in explore mode, dragging markers to mirror where groups stand. Keep placing to about two minutes. Do not reveal the think-about prompts yet. No persuading.
- 4. Hands-on: Argue Both Sides. Assign sides yourself so some must argue against themselves. Hold each timed stage firmly. Cut personal attacks at once and praise anyone who states the opponent's case better than they did. If a student names a real incident, stop gently and redirect to the general case.
- 5. Make Sense. Bring the line back and re-place. Reveal the think-about prompts now. Sample two or three voices: one who moved, one who stayed, one steelmanning a side they reject. Block any read of majority as correct.
- 6. Reflect. One minute of pair talk on what, if anything, shifted their view. Spoken only, nothing written or saved.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students think winning the debate means the majority ends up on their side, so they treat the second opinion line as a vote to be won. State plainly before and after the line that this is not a vote and the majority is not the correct answer. Praise clearer reasons for staying put as much as movement.
- Students steelman by building a weak version of the other side so it is easy to knock down. Model a genuinely strong opposing sentence yourself and set the test: state it so fairly the other side nods. Redirect anyone inventing a weak opponent.
- Students bring a real online incident or name a real person as debate evidence. Stop gently, remind them the case is general with invented names only, and offer a private word after class if something online is affecting them.

DIFFERENTIATION

- **Emerging:** Give a student who freezes on the spot one sentence starter and let them fill only the blank: Our strongest point is... because... Pair a hesitant speaker with a confident one on the same side so they contribute to prep without speaking alone.
- **Developing:** Ask them to deliver the steelman turn, restating the other side, rather than the opening statement. Have them point to a specific line in their side's case as they speak, so the argument stays anchored.
- **Proficient:** Assign finished students as fairness judges who score only how well each side steelmanned, not which side they prefer. Ask whether their answer would change if the motion said smartphones or group chats instead of social media.