



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical
thinking and speaking skills?

IS IT IMPORTANT TO CONFORM IN SOCIETY?



WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG

How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the [Smart School Councils platform](#) using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting Tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

What do the icons in the pack mean?



This is what the presenter says on the video



This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video



This is an additional debate point that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction



Welcome to Big Debate Club!

My name is Becky and today we are debating the question...

Is it important to conform in society?

Conforming to society means trying to fit society's rules and expectations which can affect us in so many ways from the clothes we wear to the way we behave. Following these norms can help things run smoothly, but does that mean we should always conform?

Conforming creates order and allows societies to function properly but is standing out and challenging norms important as it encourages creativity, change, and progress? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

Before we get started, I have a question for you...

Which famous historical figure was arrested for refusing to conform to racial segregation laws on a bus in 1955?

- a) Rosa Parks
- b) Martin Luther King Jr.
- c) Nelson Mandela
- d) Harriet Tubman

An analysis of data from over 36,000 college students between 1958 and 2001 found that the need for social approval peaked in the 1950s, declined sharply in the 1970s, and has remained low since then, suggesting a cultural shift towards individualism. (Source: *Sciencedirect.com*, [LINK](#))



FOR: It is important to conform in society

We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

Conforming creates stability and order

You might be thinking that conforming creates stability and order. Rules and traditions help society function smoothly, preventing chaos and conflict happening if people were able to act however they wanted without constraint.

A set of expectations can mean cooperation

You could say that having a set of expectations can create cooperation. When people follow shared values and norms, it can make teamwork and relationships easier as a foundation of agreement already exists, allowing communities to thrive.

Can you think of another reason why it is important to conform in society? 

It used to be important for safety and survival

Historically, conforming to group behaviours was essential for survival. For instance, during pandemics, adherence to social norms like mask-wearing and social distancing significantly reduced disease transmission.

We naturally conform, so why fight nature?

According to studies, 85% of children aged 3 to 5 who participated in these experiments conformed to peer behavior. Such a large percentage highlights how even as children, we are naturally born to have conformity tendencies, so why go against our nature? (Source: *Nature.com*, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: It is not important to conform in society

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that it is not important to conform in society?



Not conforming is important for personal freedom

You might be thinking that not conforming is important for personal freedom. Everyone is unique, and being forced to conform can take away the right to express yourself and make your own choices.

Not conforming can lead to progress and positive change

Or you say that not conforming can lead to progress and positive change. Many great leaders, inventors, and activists changed the world by challenging norms and standing up for what they believed in, without people willing to break from conformity, we would continue the same potentially forever.

Can you think of another reason why it is not important to conform in society? 

The pressure to conform can lead to stress and anxiety



The pressure to conform can lead to stress and anxiety, particularly among adolescents striving to fit in. This stress can negatively impact mental health and decision-making.

People have moved away from conformity towards individualism



An analysis of data from over 36,000 college students between 1958 and 2001 found that the need for social approval peaked in the 1950s, declined sharply in the 1970s, and has remained low since then, suggesting a cultural shift towards individualism. (Source: Allure, [LINK](#))

FactSheet: Is it important to conform in society?



Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

Yes

People are prone to conforming even in modern situations

An experiment revealed that the first person reading a comment was 32% more likely to upvote it if it had already received a fake positive score, demonstrating how initial ratings can bias subsequent evaluations. We will naturally follow other's behaviour so it is important to follow your natural instincts. (Source: *Nakayama and Wan*, [LINK](#))

We naturally conform as children so we should all agree to continue

According to studies, 85% of children aged 3 to 5 who participated in these experiments conformed to peer behaviour. Such a large percentage highlights how even as children, we are naturally born to have conformity tendencies, so why go against our nature? (Source: *Nature.com*, [LINK](#))

Conformity can mean the continuation of important cultural traditions

A study examining values in human societies concluded that tradition and conformity are closely linked and are the values most likely to drive pro-environmental behaviour. This suggests that individuals and groups with high levels of these values are more likely to develop and adhere to shared norms, thereby preserving cultural practices. (Source: *National Library of Medicine*, [LINK](#))

NO

Conformity isn't always positive and can lead to immoral choices

Conforming to group norms may lead individuals to act against their moral beliefs, resulting in ethical dilemmas. A key example of that is the Stanford Prison experiment where participants assigned the role of 'guards' began exhibiting authoritarian behaviours, leading to ethical concerns, despite their prior dispositions. (Source: *Stanford Prison Experiment*, [LINK](#))

People are moving away from conformity towards individualism

An analysis of data from over 36,000 college students between 1958 and 2001 found that the need for social approval peaked in the 1950s, declined sharply in the 1970s, and has remained low since then, suggesting a cultural shift towards individualism. (Source: *Allure*, [LINK](#))

It is important to question conformity especially when it reinforces inequality

Research indicates that human societies often reinforce compliance with social norms by rewarding those who obey and punishing those who violate them. This mechanism can lead individuals to conform to prevailing norms, even if they perpetuate social inequalities (Source: *National Library of Medicine*, [LINK](#))



Sentence Starters

POINT

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because...

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is...

HOT: You could say that...

EVIDENCE

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example...

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that...

HOT: I know this because...

EXPLANATION

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as...

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because...

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as...

LINK

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by...

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because...

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as...





**Post your debate on
social media!**

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

#BIGDEBATECUB

TWITTER @SSCCTV

INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS



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DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

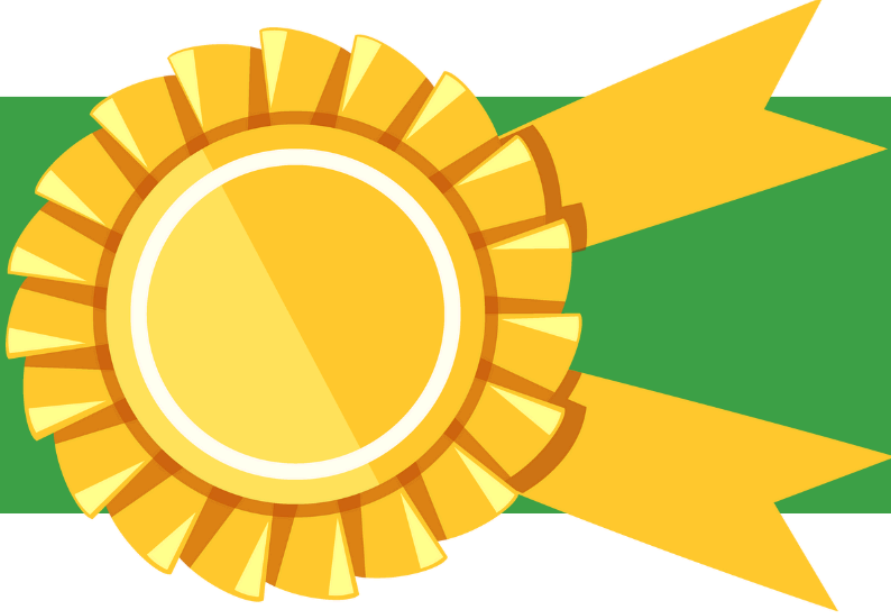
For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

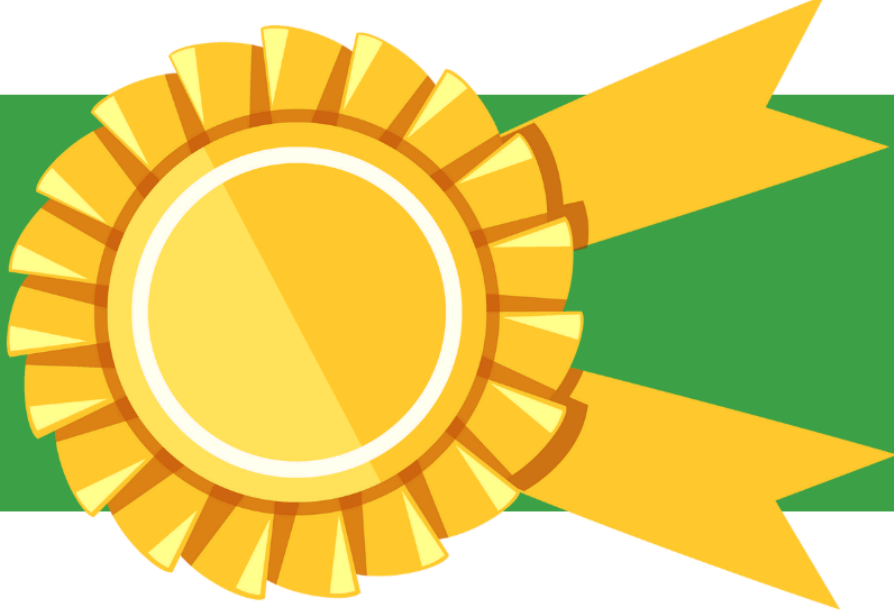
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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BEST IDEA OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

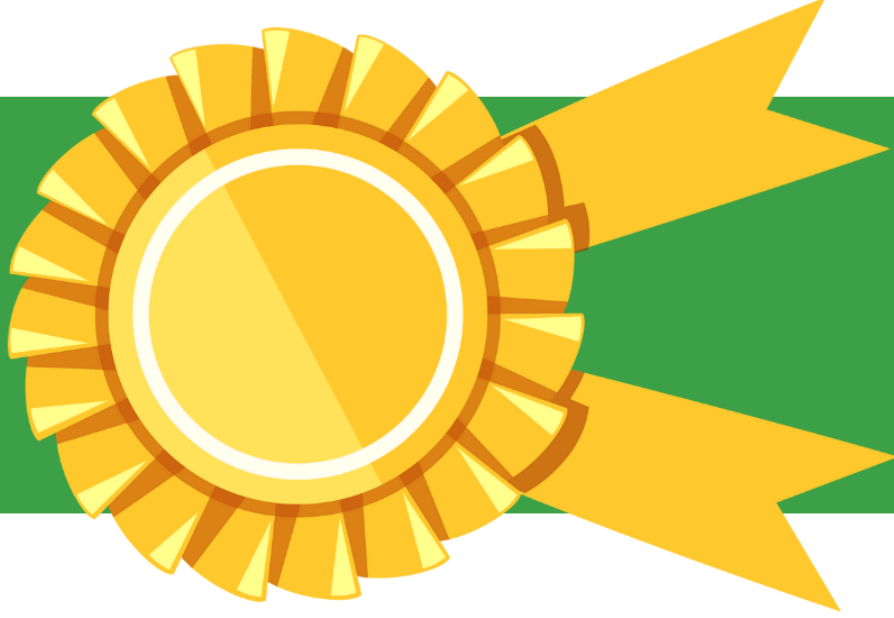
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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