

BIG DEBATE CLUB

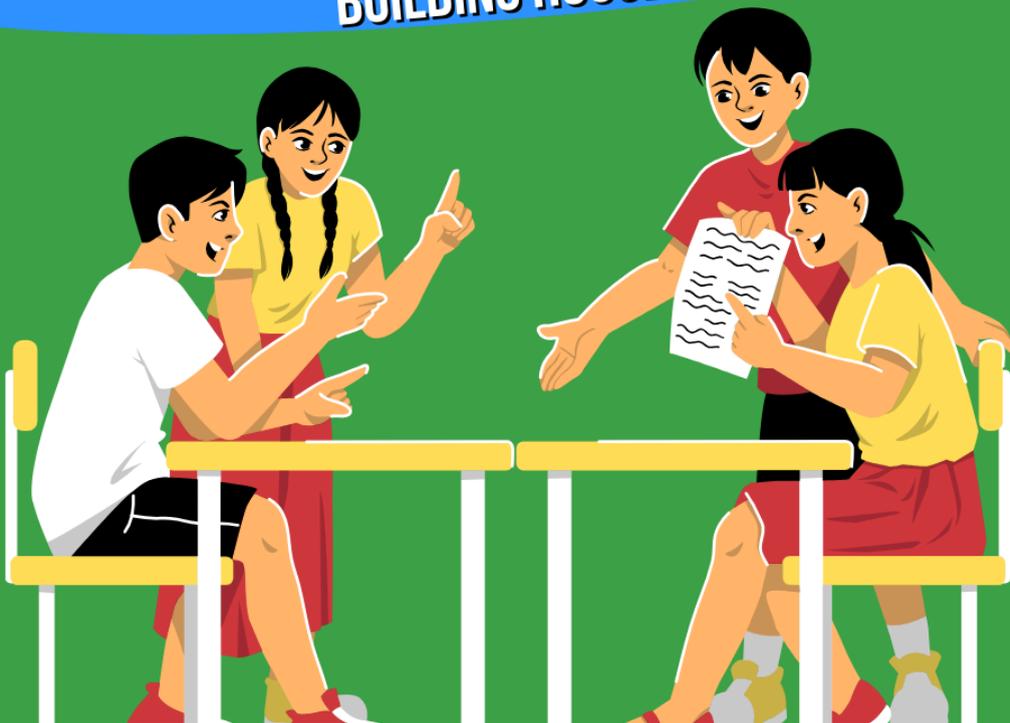


**Smart School Councils**

# DEBATE PACK

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

**IS PLANTING TREES MORE IMPORTANT THAN  
BUILDING HOUSES?**



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# 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 planting trees more important than building houses?

Moving forward and getting bigger and better can be seen as a good thing. But as cities grow, we often have to choose between green space and construction of houses. We all need homes to live in but we also need trees to survive.

Trees clean the air, give us shade, and support wildlife. On the other hand, houses give people shelter, safety, and comfort. So what matters more - planting trees or building homes? You decide.

## Brain Gym Question

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

How many people rely on forests for their livelihood or survival, according to the UN?

- a) 500 million
- b) 750 million
- c) 1.6 billion
- d) 2.4 billion

From March 2013 to March 2023, the UK built about 184,000 new homes per year on average. This was below the long-term average and lower than what many experts say is needed to meet demand. (Source: *Thinkhouse*, [LINK](#))



# FOR: Planting trees is more important than building houses

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

## More trees means more protection against climate change



You might be thinking that more trees means more protection against climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, so not only do they clean the air we breathe but with less carbon dioxide, it also fights climate change and prevents the damage it causes.

## More trees mean more habitat for animals

You could say that more trees mean more habitat for animals. Planting lots of trees together can create a forest, and forests are home to thousands of animal species that lose habitat when trees are cut down, making sure species can thrive in their forest home.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that planting trees is more important than building houses? 

## Trees can help prevent flooding



Trees can also be useful in cities for managing rainwater and reducing surface water flooding. Whether through leaf absorbing the water, which can reduce water collecting by up to 99% compared with tarmac surfaces, or through root absorption, it can mean water is reduced and therefore reduce the ability to form floods. (Source: Woodland Trust, [LINK](#))

## Trees can reduce air pollution and impact climate change



Trees can reduce air pollution and help prevent thousands of deaths. For instance, in 2020, natural removal of air pollution via trees by greenspace in the UK was estimated to avoid 2,001 deaths and 49,126 years of life lost. (Source: Woodland Trust, [LINK](#))



## AGAINST: Building houses is more important than planting trees

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that building houses is more important.



### Shelter is essential for a good life

You might think that shelter is essential for a good life. Every human deserves a safe and warm place to live in order to live a good life with comfort and an address to secure a bank account and job - buildings for homes will continue to be built in order to guarantee this.

### With a growing population, we need more jobs

Or you could also say with a growing population we need more jobs. By having more construction of homes to prevent overcrowding with a growing population, there are more construction jobs available and more opportunities to make money for new workers.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that building houses is more important than planting trees? 

### The need for temporary accommodation is increasing

The number of family groups in temporary accommodation has more than doubled in England since 2010, reaching 128,000 in 2025, showing the importance of building more houses. (Source: Reuters, [LINK](#))



### So many people have unmet housing needs

It is so important that we build more houses as so many people have housing needs, for instance, around 8.5 million people in England face some form of unmet housing need, including overcrowding and unaffordable rent. (Source: National Housing Federation, [LINK](#))



# FactSheet: Is planting trees more important than building houses?



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

## Planting trees is more important

### ***Trees reduce air pollution naturally***

Trees can reduce air pollution and help prevent thousands of deaths. For instance, in 2020, natural removal of air pollution via trees by greenspace in the UK was estimated to avoid 2,001 deaths and 49,126 years of life lost. (Source: Woodland Trust, [LINK](#))

### ***Trees can aid in regulating heat***

Trees can be helpful in cities when it comes to climate. Trees in city spaces can cool street temperatures by up to 5 °C during heatwaves, which reduces the heat's danger and heat-related health risks. (Source: TCV, [LINK](#))

### ***Trees can prevent flooding***

Trees can also be useful in cities for managing rainwater and reducing surface water flooding. Whether through leaf absorbing the water, which can reduce water collecting by up to 99% compared with tarmac surfaces, or through root absorption, it can mean water is reduced and therefore reduce the ability to form floods. (Source: Woodland Trust, [LINK](#))

## Building houses is more important

### ***We need to build houses as there is a major shortage in the UK***

Building houses is so important as the UK has an estimated shortage of 6.5 million homes compared with similar European countries, so, according to some, we need them more than we need more trees. (Source: The Centre for Policy Studies, [LINK](#))

### ***There are so many people have unmet housing needs***

It is so important that we build more houses as so many people have housing needs, for instance, around 8.5 million people in England face some form of unmet housing need, including overcrowding and unaffordable rent. (Source: National Housing Federation, [LINK](#))

### ***The amount of need for temporary housing is increasing***

The number of family groups in temporary accommodation has more than doubled in England since 2010, reaching 128,000 in 2025, showing the importance of building more houses. (Source: Reuters, [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 @SSCCTY**

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# DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

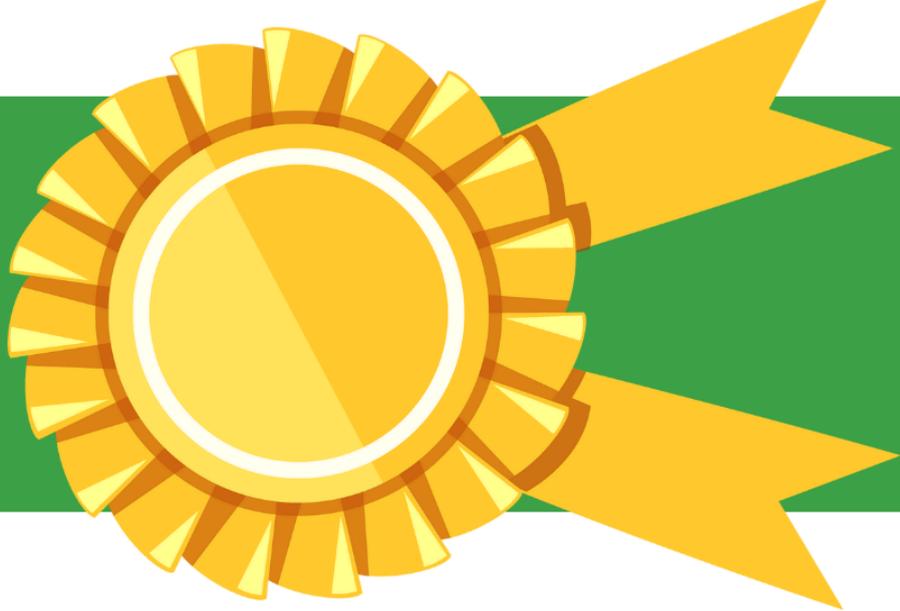
For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

*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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School  
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Community



# CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

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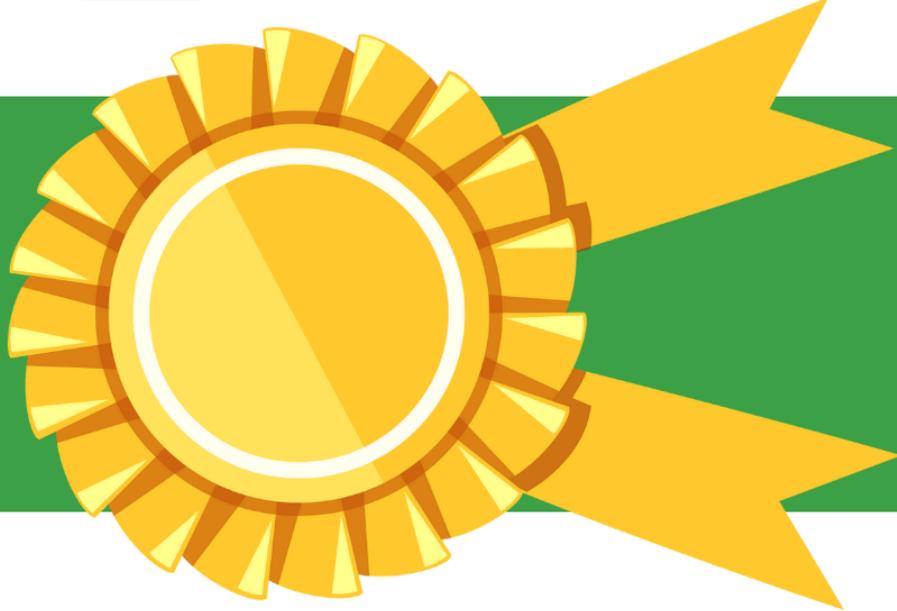
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

*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...

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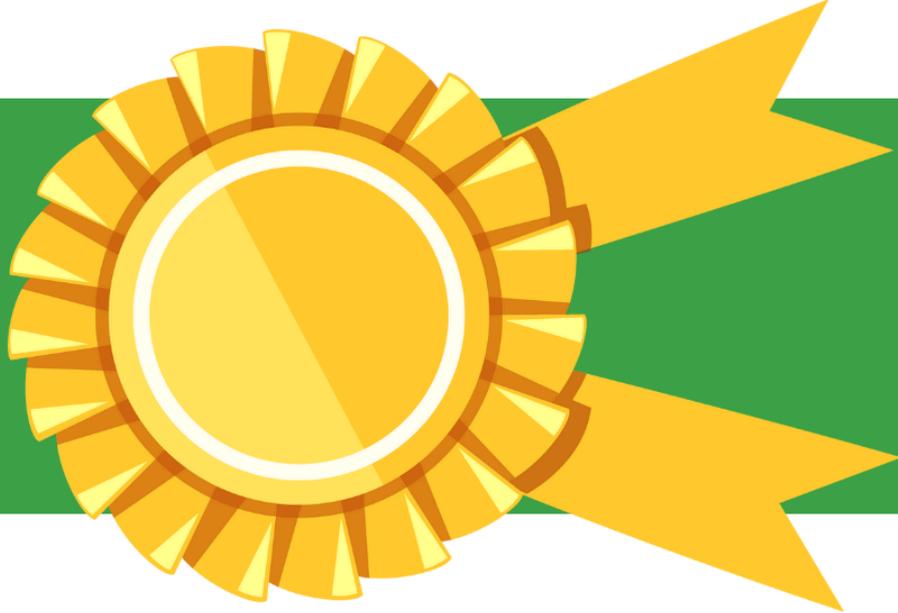
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

**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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