



**Smart School Councils**

# DEBATE PACK

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

**CAN ONLINE FRIENDS BE AS IMPORTANT AS FRIENDS YOU SEE FACE-TO-FACE?**



[WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG](http://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...

Can online friends be as important as friends you see face-to-face?

It's always important to appreciate your friends and to make sure that those who are kind and support you know how much you care about them. But are online friends just as important as those friends you see in real life? An online friend might be someone you connect with through gaming, shared hobbies, school platforms, or social media while real life friends are those you see at school, in your neighbourhood or clubs.

According to Ofcom, around 99% of UK children aged 12–15 go online, and many use the internet every day, so making new online friends becomes a regular thing when communicating online is a big part of young people's lives. Research shows that strong friendships, both online and offline, are linked to better mental wellbeing and happiness. But is there something special about seeing someone face-to-face? You decide.

## Brain Gym Question

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

According to Ofcom, approximately what percentage of UK children aged 12–15 use the internet?

- a. 99%
- b. 89%
- c. 79%
- d. 69%

Ofcom reports that around **99% of UK children aged 12–15 use the internet**. Online friendships are now a normal part of life for many young people. But are they The best kind of friendships or are face-to face relationships more important?



(Source: Ofcom, [LINK](#))

## FOR: Online friends can be as important

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


### You can create meaningful and important connections online



You might be thinking that you can create meaningful and important connections online. Many young people meet friends online through shared hobbies like gaming, art, or sports. Research from the Pew Research Center found that 57% of teens have made a new friend online. Sharing interests can create meaningful connections, even if people live far apart.

### Emotional support can happen online

You could say that emotional support can happen online. Studies show that digital communication can provide real emotional support. Young people often say they feel more comfortable opening up online, especially about personal topics. Being able to message someone anytime can make online friends feel very important.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that online friends can be just as important as friends you see face-to-face? 

### You can gain broadened and accessible support systems



The internet removes geographic and physical barriers, enabling users to build a larger diversity of friendships. According to the Pew Research Center, over half of teens have made new friends online, widening their support systems beyond their immediate physical environments. (Source: Pew Research Center, [LINK](#))

### Online friendships can have a positive effect on mental health



A study conducted by Shaw and Gant (2002) found that internet use was linked with decreased loneliness and depression, suggesting that online friendships can have a positive impact on mental health. Furthermore, online friendships often allow for a level of anonymity that can encourage openness and honesty, as individuals may feel more comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings without the fear of judgement. (Source: EduBirdie, [LINK](#))



## AGAINST: Friends you see face-to-face are more important

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that friends you see face-to-face are more important than online friends.

### Face to face interactions build stronger experiences



You might think that face to face interactions build stronger experiences. Psychologists say face-to-face communication helps develop body language understanding, empathy, and social confidence. Seeing someone's expressions and tone can deepen understanding in ways texting cannot and make face to face experiences even more important.

### Online experiences can pose safety risks

Or you could also say online experiences can pose safety risks. While many online friendships are positive, Ofcom reports that some young people have experienced negative online interactions. This means online friendships can sometimes carry risks if people are not careful.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that friends you see face-to-face are more important? 

## Being together has a more positive effect than online experiences



Being physically together releases oxytocin in the body, a hormone related to trust and bonding, which digital interactions cannot physically facilitate. A ScienceDirect study confirms that in-person interaction is more linked with positive affect and social connection. (Source: ScienceDirect, [LINK](#))

## More face-to-face friendships, more happiness

In person and real-life interactions are associated with higher overall happiness and physical health benefits. Research from PubMed shows that doubling real-life friendships brings about the equivalent amount of positive well-being as a 50% increase in work income. (Source: PubMed, [LINK](#))



# FactSheet: Can online friends be as important as friends you see face-to-face?



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

## Online friends can be as important

### ***You can gain broadened and more accessible support networks***

The internet removes geographic and physical barriers, enabling users to build a larger diversity of friendships. According to the Pew Research Center, over half of teens have made new friends online, widening their support systems beyond their immediate physical environments. (Source: *Pew Research Center*, [LINK](#))

### ***Online friendships can have a positive impact on mental health***

A study conducted by Shaw and Gant (2002) found that internet use was linked with decreased loneliness and depression, suggesting that online friendships can have a positive impact on mental health. Furthermore, online friendships often allow for a level of anonymity that can encourage openness and honesty, as individuals may feel more comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings without the fear of judgement. (Source: *EduBirdie*, [LINK](#))

### ***Online and face-to-face has equal value in the digital age***

For many, the distinction between digital and physical space is dissolving, with voice calls, gaming chats, and texts substituting face-to-face interaction. A study by HealthCentral explains that true online connections allow for empathy, vulnerability, and genuine interest just like offline connections. (Source: *HealthCentral*, [LINK](#))

## Friends you see face-to-face are more important

### ***More face-to-face friends, more happiness***

In person and real-life interactions are associated with higher overall happiness and physical health benefits. Research from PubMed shows that doubling real-life friendships brings about the equivalent amount of positive well-being as a 50% increase in work income. (Source: *PubMed*, [LINK](#))

### ***Being together has a more positive effect than online experiences***

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### ***Face-to-face friendships have more long-term commitment and understanding***

Traditional face-to-face friendships naturally involve more joint activities, variety of experiences, and interdependence, dependence on each other. Studies from ResearchGate show that offline friendships are stronger than online ones in terms of long-term commitment and mutual understanding. (Source: *ResearchGate*, [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**

**INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS**



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# DEBATER OF THE WEEK

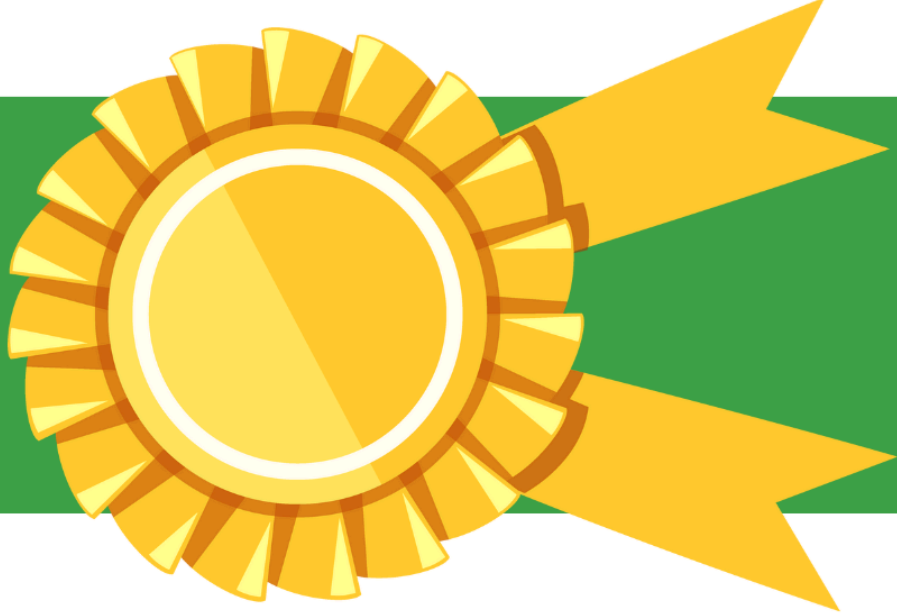
We are proud to present this certificate to...

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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Councils  
Community



# CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

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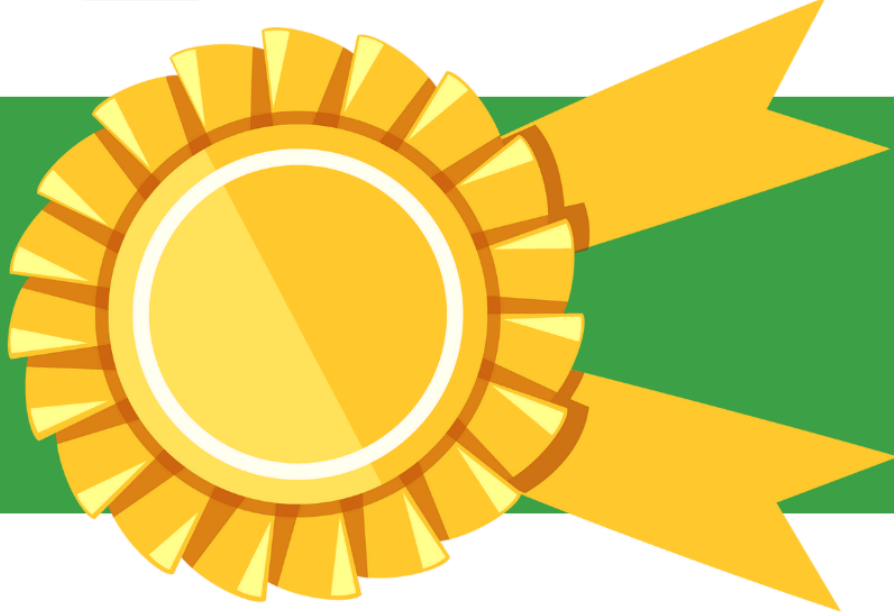
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

*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...

\_\_\_\_\_

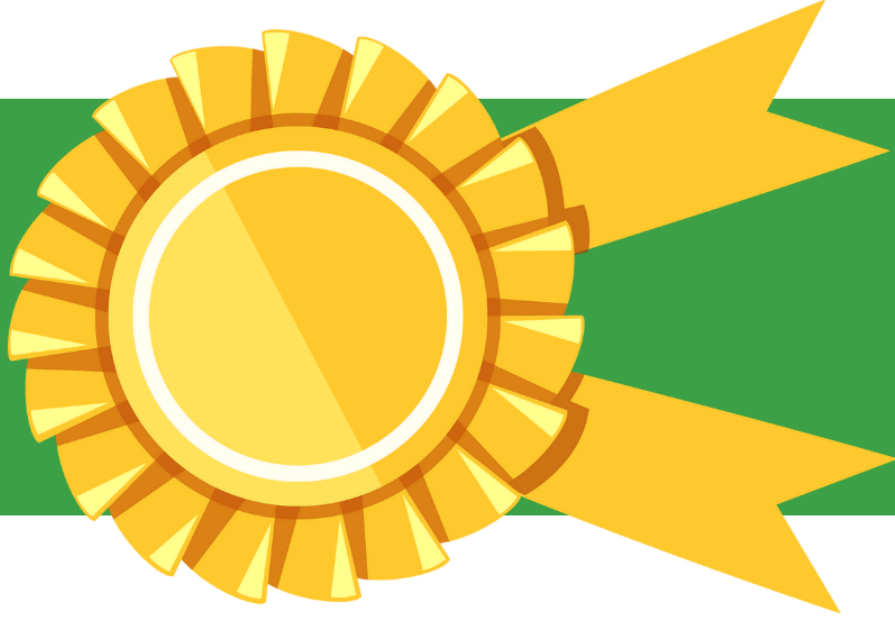
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

**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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