

BIG DEBATE CLUB

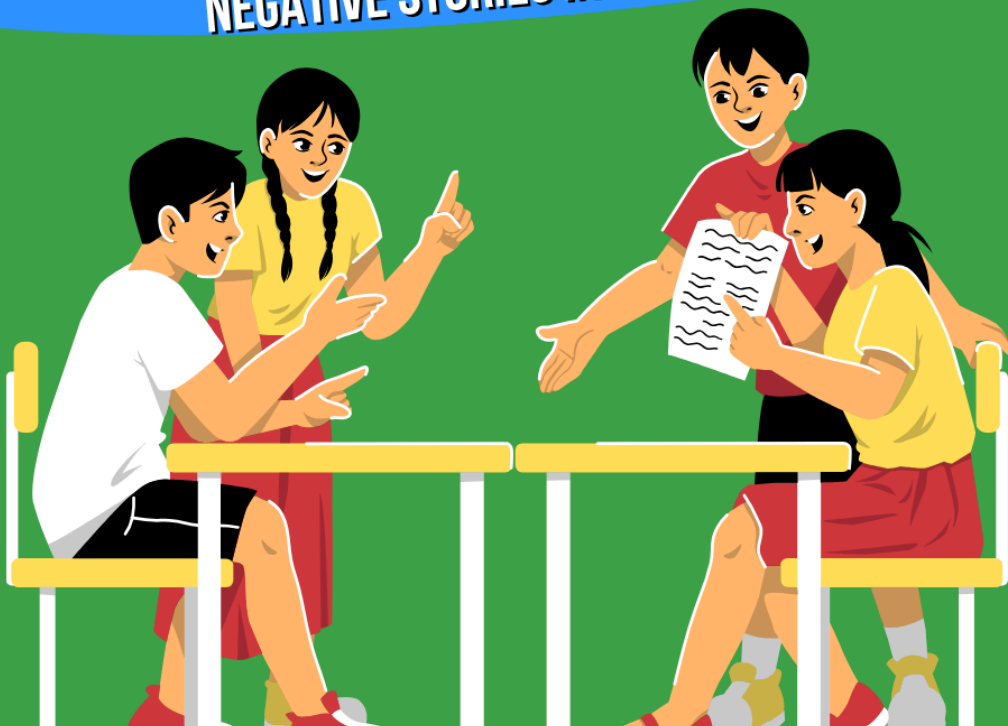


Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

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

**SHOULD WE FOCUS MORE ON POSITIVE STORIES OVER
NEGATIVE STORIES IN THE NEWS?**



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...

Should we focus more on positive stories over negative stories in the news?

There is so much going on in the news lately, and often the more sensational, violent and negative news takes priority as it is more dramatic. And I don't know about you - but watching so much negative news sometimes makes it hard to keep up with the news, even though I know it is really important to be informed on what is going on in the world. Research from the Reuters Institute found that many people say the news feels too negative, and some people even avoid it because it makes them feel worried or stressed.

At the same time, journalists, those who research and report news, believe the public needs to know when something important or dangerous is happening. So should the news focus more on positive stories or is reporting negative events an important part of keeping people informed? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

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

Which phrase best describes the main job of journalists when reporting the news?

- a. To entertain people
- b. To advertise products
- c. To inform the public about important events
- d. To decide government laws

Social media users are 1.91 times more likely to share news articles that are negative rather than positive. So should we give users more negative stories to share and read as this is what they enjoy? Or should we share more positive news so they can be encouraged to spread positivity instead?



(Source: Cambridge University Business School, [LINK](#))

FOR: We should focus more on positive stories

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


Positive news can improve people's well-being



You might be thinking that positive news can improve people's well-being. Studies show that constant exposure to negative news can affect people's mental health. Research discussed by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that around 4 in 10 people sometimes avoid the news because it makes them feel upset or overwhelmed. So more focus on positive news could reduce this.

Good things happen in the world and need promotion

You could say that good things happen in the world and need promotion to help improve the negative things. If the news mostly reports problems, it can give the impression that the world is getting worse all the time. But global data shows improvements in areas like health and education over the last 50 years, while some journalists can promote "solutions journalism," which focuses on how people solve problems rather than just reporting the problem itself.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that we need to focus more on positive stories in the news? 

It is turning people away from being informed



According to the Reuters Institute Report from the University of Oxford, around 40% of global audiences actively avoid the news, primarily because it negatively impacts their mood or makes them feel powerless against the things they see or hear happening. (Source: Reuters Institute, [LINK](#))

Positive news encourages positive actions



During her research, Professor Denise Baden from Southampton University, exposed undergraduate students to positive and negative versions of similar news stories. Negative stories included the war in Syria and coral reef destruction. Positive stories included peace talks with Iran and oceans becoming cleaner. She found that positive news encouraged students to take positive actions, such as adopting pro-environment practices. The more anxious or pessimistic the stories made participants feel, the less motivated they were to act. (Source: Southampton University, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: We should not focus more on positive stories

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that we should not focus more on positive stories over negative stories in the news.

Balanced news is important



You might think that balanced news is important. Many experts argue that the goal of journalism is not to focus only on positive or negative stories, but to report events accurately and fairly, especially serious events such as natural disasters, crime, or political decisions because these events affect people's lives and safety.

Reporting the negative news stories keeps leaders accountable

Or you could also say reporting the news on bad events keeps leaders accountable to their people. Reporting news often reveals problems such as leaders doing wrong things, unsafe products, or unfair policies. Without journalists reporting negative stories, these problems might stay hidden and people will continue to do bad things which might hurt the public.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that we should not focus more on positive stories over negative stories in the news? 🗨️

Negative news stories encourage you to seek out more



Research shows that negative content can encourage information-seeking behaviours and, when it comes to political information, negative news stories potentially develop a need to have a deeper understanding than positive messages. (Source: *Nature Human Behaviour*, [LINK](#))

Negative news is good for business

A massive study on online media published in *Nature Human Behaviour* analysed over 105,000 news stories and found that each additional negative word in a headline increased click rates by 2.3%. Positive words generally decreased the rate in which people have read or clicked on the news story. So in order to keep those who report in the news in business, they need to produce negative stories to entice readers. (Source: *Nature Human Behaviour*, [LINK](#))



FactSheet: Should we focus more on positive stories over negative stories in the news?



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

We should focus more on positive stories

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Negative news can have a detrimental impact

Relentless negative headlines increase stress hormones like cortisol. Research from the Psychometrics Centre and others notes that excessive exposure links with feelings of anxiety, helplessness, and depression. (Source: Science Direct, [LINK](#))

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Humans are hard-wired to lean towards negative news

Humans are physiologically hardwired to pay more attention to negative information and therefore news should not focus just on positive news. Studies show physiological responses (like heart rate) are stronger and more sustained for negative stories. (Source: Cambridge University Business School, [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

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TWITTER @SSCCTY

INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS



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DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

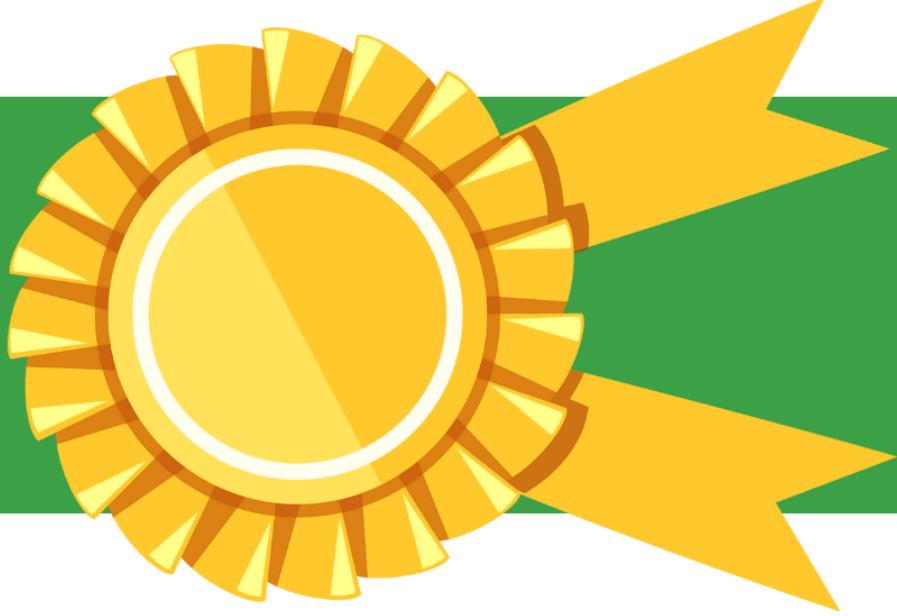
For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

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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CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

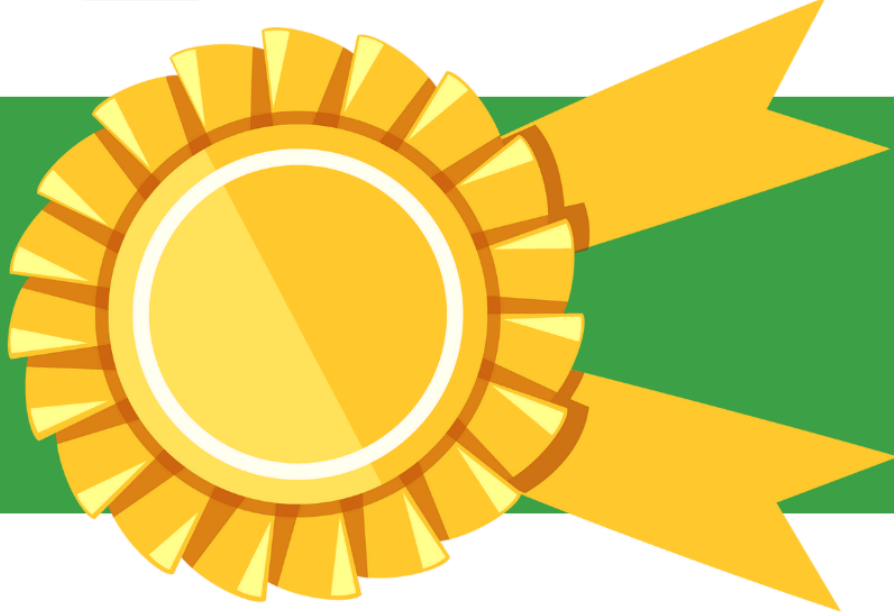
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

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...

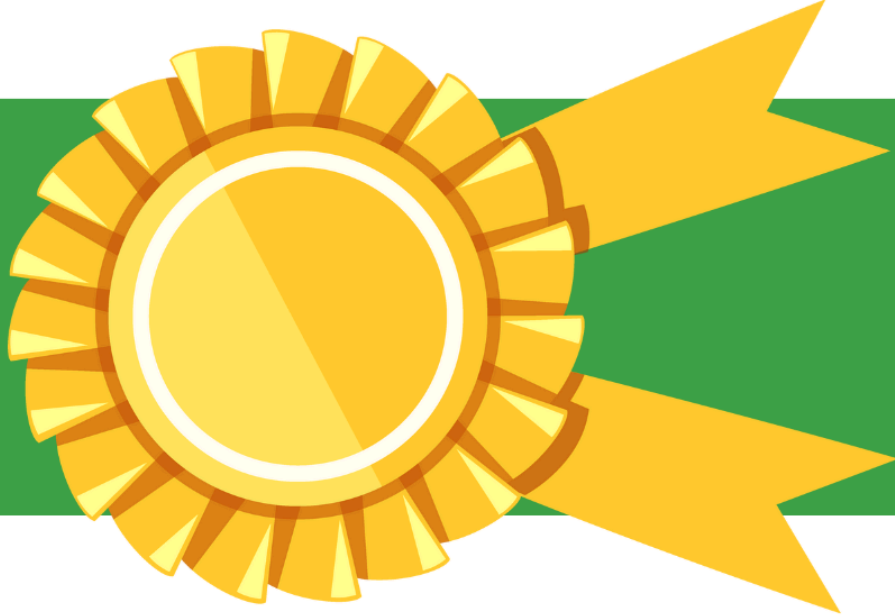
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

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



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Founder, Smart School Councils



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