



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

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

SHOULD LOOKING AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT BE OUR MAIN
PRIORITY WHEN PREPARING FOR HEATWAVES?



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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...

Should looking after the environment be our main priority when preparing for heatwaves?

Welcome to our second current affairs debate. This week we are discussing something that has affected us all, 2026's many heatwaves. Heatwaves are periods of unusually hot weather, which can mean more enjoying the sunshine or can be uncomfortable, or even dangerous, particularly for vulnerable people.

In the Spring and Summer of 2026, we have had over 40 days of temperatures over 30C, breaking last year's record. Climate change is making heatwaves more common and more extreme. So, when preparing for heatwaves, should helping the environment be our main priority to prevent more extreme heat in the future? Or should the most important thing be protecting people's lives right now? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

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

According to the BBC, how many heatwaves did we have during the Spring and Summer of 2026?

- a) 3
- b) 4
- c) 5
- d) 6

If so many people are concerned about how the environment and climate change might get worse, then it should be our focus. According to the People's Climate Vote, 80% of people globally want their governments to take stronger action to tackle the climate crisis. But are there other priorities we should have - such as vulnerable people? (Source: Oxford University, [LINK](#))



FOR: Helping the environment should be our main priority

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

Protecting the environment could reduce heat in the future



You might think that protecting nature and the environment during heatwaves could reduce heat in the future. The Met Office, who records the weather, says that climate change caused by humans has made extreme heat events in the UK more frequent and more intense. If we want fewer extremely hot days in the future, tackling climate change should be a priority. This could be through reducing pollution or planting more trees to help reduce greenhouse gases warming the planet.

Trees and green spaces can help keep us cool

You could say that trees and green spaces can help keep us cool. Trees provide shade and can cool the surrounding area. Research published by the Royal Horticultural Society found that some green spaces can be several degrees cooler than nearby built-up areas during hot weather. Planting trees and creating more green spaces could help us prepare for heatwaves while also improving the environment.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that looking after the environment should be our main priority when preparing for heatwaves? 

So many people are affected by climate change



With so many affected by the weather, floods and other impacts such as drought, it would benefit the world to look after or reduce climate. According to the UN environment programme, around 100-300 million people are at increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of human activities and climate change. (Source: UN Environmental Programme, [LINK](#))

Environmental change can help support future generations



It could be argued that preparing for heatwaves isn't just about surviving the next hot day. We should also try to reduce the causes of climate change so future generations don't face an even bigger problem. According to the ONS, roughly 74% of adults worried about climate change state that it impacting future generations is their primary concern, so people want to change things to help, why not do that while preparing for heatwaves? (Source: ONS, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: Helping the environment should not be our main priority

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that looking after the environment should not be our main priority when preparing for heatwaves.



Looking after vulnerable people has to be the priority

You might think that looking after vulnerable people has to be the priority when preparing for a heatwave. Very hot weather can cause serious health problems, particularly for older people, babies and people who are already unwell. The UK Health Security Agency estimated that the 2022 heatwaves were so hot that they were linked to an extra 4,500 older people passing away in England. We need to make sure people are safe and healthy before anything else.

Keeping people safe should be a bigger priority

Or you could also say keeping people safe should be a bigger priority than the environment. There are simple things we can do straight away during a heatwave, which can include opening windows when it is cooler, drinking 6-8 glasses of water and staying in the shade can mean everyone's wellness. These things might not tackle climate change but they can help protect people.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that looking after the environment should not be our main priority when preparing for heatwaves? 

Heat can also have an economic (money) impact

The heat can also cause a monetary impact on society, where money can be lost through people not being able to work due to safety issues or heat related stress. In the United States, heat-related economic loss already costs roughly \$100 billion a year, a number projected to hit \$500 billion within 25 years. (Source: *The Atlantic Council/DW*, [LINK](#))



Heat can cause issues for infrastructure such as electricity

Due to the heat, there becomes a lot of demand on infrastructure such as healthcare facilities and electricity framework. Whether it is more people using electrical items to cool themselves caused black-outs due to overloading the electricity infrastructure or European heatwave data showing emergency department visits doubling in the heat, can mean our important infrastructure needs help in order to not impact everyone negatively. (Source: *World Health Organisation*, [LINK](#))



FactSheet: Should helping the environment be our main priority when preparing for heatwaves?



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

Looking after the environment should be our priority

Environmental change can support future generations

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

People are worried about the environment, so we should fix it

If so many people are concerned about how the environment and climate change might get worse, then it should be our focus. According to the People's Climate Vote, 80% of people globally want their governments to take stronger action to tackle the climate crisis. (Source: Oxford University, [LINK](#))

So many people are affected by climate change, we need to prevent their harm

With so many affected by the weather, floods and other impacts such as drought, it would benefit the world to look after or reduce climate. According to the UN environment programme, around 100-300 million people are at increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of human activities and climate change. (Source: UN Environmental Programme, [LINK](#))

Looking after the environment should not be our priority

Heat can cause health problems we must protect from these

The higher the heat gets, the more it can impact on the health of vulnerable people, such as older people and people who are already unwell. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reveals that global heat-related deaths rose from roughly 335,000 annually in the 1990s to 546,000 annually. (Source: World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), [LINK](#))

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Heat can also cause issues for infrastructure such as healthcare and electricity

Due to the heat, there becomes a lot of demand on infrastructure such as healthcare facilities and electricity framework. Whether it is more people using electrical items to cool themselves caused black-outs due to overloading the electricity infrastructure or European heatwave data showing emergency department visits doubling in the heat, can mean our important infrastructure needs help in order to not impact everyone negatively. (Source: World Health Organisation, [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...

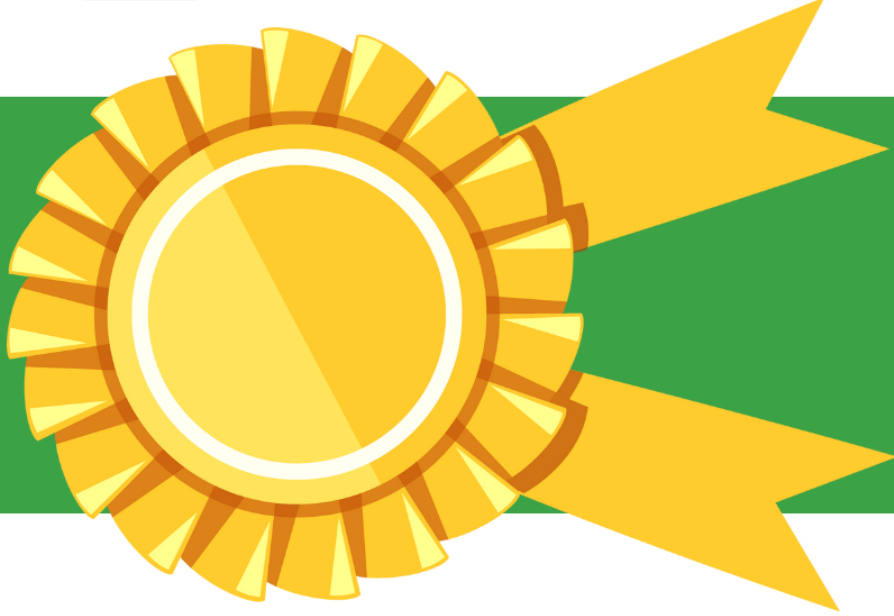
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

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...

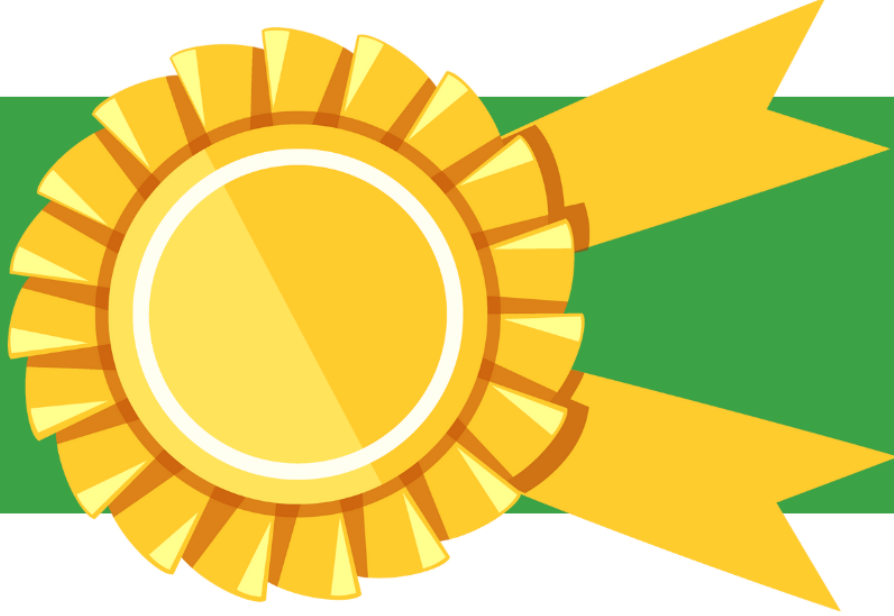
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

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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