

understand the world around them and how it works but to articulate and defend ways in which it could be improved.

If you just want to say things that everyone agrees with, become a pop singer. Debate is an exercise in discovering things that, often surprisingly, turn out to be true.

EXERCISE

Take from a newspaper an op-ed piece that you believe to be untrue; the more you disagree the better. Consider, in particular, the conclusions the writer draws from the information she presents.

1. Work with a partner to establish a different explanation for the information the writer sets out and identify how that evidence could be interpreted in an opposite way.
 2. Take turns defending and attacking the points the writer makes. The purpose of this exercise is to see ways in which the same information can often lead to different conclusions. Discuss how it might appear from the perspective of different people. How would a scientist think about it? An environmentalist? An employer? A trade unionist?
 3. Once you have some ideas about other interpretations of the available data, use the Internet to investigate what responses other people had to the article or how that data was used elsewhere.
 4. Then seek out additional data that supports your interpretation of events.
 5. Use both the information from the original article and any additional evidence you have discovered to present the opposing point of view. Try to blend your criticism of the article with your own position in a way that uses both sets of data to support your case.
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CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- Interaction is at the heart of a debate, and debaters should not seek to minimize or avoid it.
- Speeches should focus on the clash within a debate and ignore issues that are uncontroversial.
- The first two speakers have a critical role in determining which areas of the topic will be disputed between the two sides.