

Lesson-4: What are the best reasons or evidence?

How to prepare:

Provide print or digital newspapers and identify or have students help you identify a controversial subject to study. Review the meaning of “controversy.” (Lesson 1 focuses on the meaning of “controversy.”)

Establish ground rules for conducting discussions: Everyone should have a chance to speak. Explain that strong opinions are supported by text or evidence that can be verified. Discuss the goal of the lesson, not to reach agreement but rather to inform students and have them listen thoughtfully to each other, even when/ if they disagree.

Review student page, POINTS of VIEW, for use during this lesson.

What to do:

Have students collect news and information from stories in print editions and archived stories in digital editions. They should also search other reliable sources for information related to the controversy.

Ask students to outline all sides of an issue, presented in credible sources. Use reading and collaborative conversations to make sure they grasp the facts. During discussions (or seminars), they should use facts to support any opinions they voice. They should cite sources in news stories and elsewhere and not rely on hearsay and/or emotional appeal. Provide RESOLVING CONFLICTS and POINTS of VIEW for students to use during the fact-finding process.

Have students list ten reasons why something related to the controversy should or should not be done. In small groups, have them improve the list and create broad categories. They should vote on the best reasons and vote again to choose a position.

Or have the whole class or small groups select the three best reasons for each side. Students should vote before and after discussion, and determine whether the conversations affect their positions.

Ask students to write about the difficulty they have suspending judgment while they and other students collect news and information.

Follow-Up: Review what you know and learn from reading about how to judge the credibility of a source. Discuss your conclusions and post a checklist on a classroom chart for reference. Review this website and list other sources on judging credibility: <http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/six-critical-questions-can-use-evaluate-media-content/>