

Basic Argumentation (1)

A. Goal of the lesson

The Goal of this lesson is to get students to know the basic structure of an argument and make them feel comfortable within the group so that they are open to actually speaking their mind, sharing their opinions and refuting others.

B. Activities

Lecture (15 min)

Explain the basic structure of an argument to debaters. What is the difference between an argument and just a claim? And why is it better to use arguments than claims. You can derive an explanation of the structure of an argument from Simon Quinn: Debating, pg. 66 – 69.

Exercise (30 min)

Use an exercise “Deserted Island” to practice the skills learned.

Version 1: Ask each of the students to write down two items they would like to take with them if they know that they will be stuck on a deserted island for a couple of months. Make a list of all the items. 1) Have everyone justify their selection; 2) Have students making arguments about what should not be taken onto the island. 3) Have students compare different items and their necessity on the island. 4) Narrow down the list to 2-4 items, depending on the size of the group and time you have.

Version 2: Ask each of the students to write down a job that would never want to be doing. That group of professionals are stuck on a deserted island together. They have managed to build a small boat that could carry 2-4 of them (depending on the size of the group and time that you have). 1) Ask each of the people why they should be on that boat. 2) Ask each of the students who should not be on the boat. 3) Have a discussion and votes, about who should be able to take the boat.

Version 3: I have also used a different favourite/least favourite characters from books, films etc. In order to do that you need to assure that students have more-or-less the same understanding who the characters are.

Form this activity the students can learn to make arguments according to the structure and have their first tiny debates. It’s a fun way to take off the pressure, so that is easier to move on to making arguments on more serious topics.

C. Preparation

- Make sure that there is a board in the room where you are doing the training. For version 2, you would like to use sticky notes so students can put these on their forehead and even better impersonate the characters they have chosen.
- Think about nice examples of arguments that you can use while explaining the theory. Make sure that the examples are suitable for the target group.

D. Hints

- Couple students start to dominate the discussion – make sure you ask the quiet ones as well.
- In version 2, if the discussion gets stuck Ask who would be the most use on the island, and maybe, therefore, should not be on the boat. Or maybe who is too much of a trouble to stay.

E. Verification

- What is the emotion that the students take from this lesson? Was it difficult? Why? What can the trainer do for the student to help them?
- What should every trainer do to learn from the lesson for the future:
- What activity/example/discussion produce best results at this lesson?
- What was the biggest problem during the lesson? How can I avoid/prevent it in future?

Ask: Did I avoid/prevent the biggest problem which occurred the last time I