

The Debate Game



Introduction

What is debate, and why
should we do it?

Debate Is Social

Debate is a fun way to learn about a topic by discussing it with your peers in a friendly competition.

Debate is like a sport, but for speaking. You are part of a team, arguing one side or point of view on an issue against another team.



Debate Is Engaging

People learn more when they are asked to teach others what they know. Researchers have shown this works for learners from preschool to college, and for all kinds of subjects.

When we openly discuss a topic with our peers, we develop an understanding of the topic.

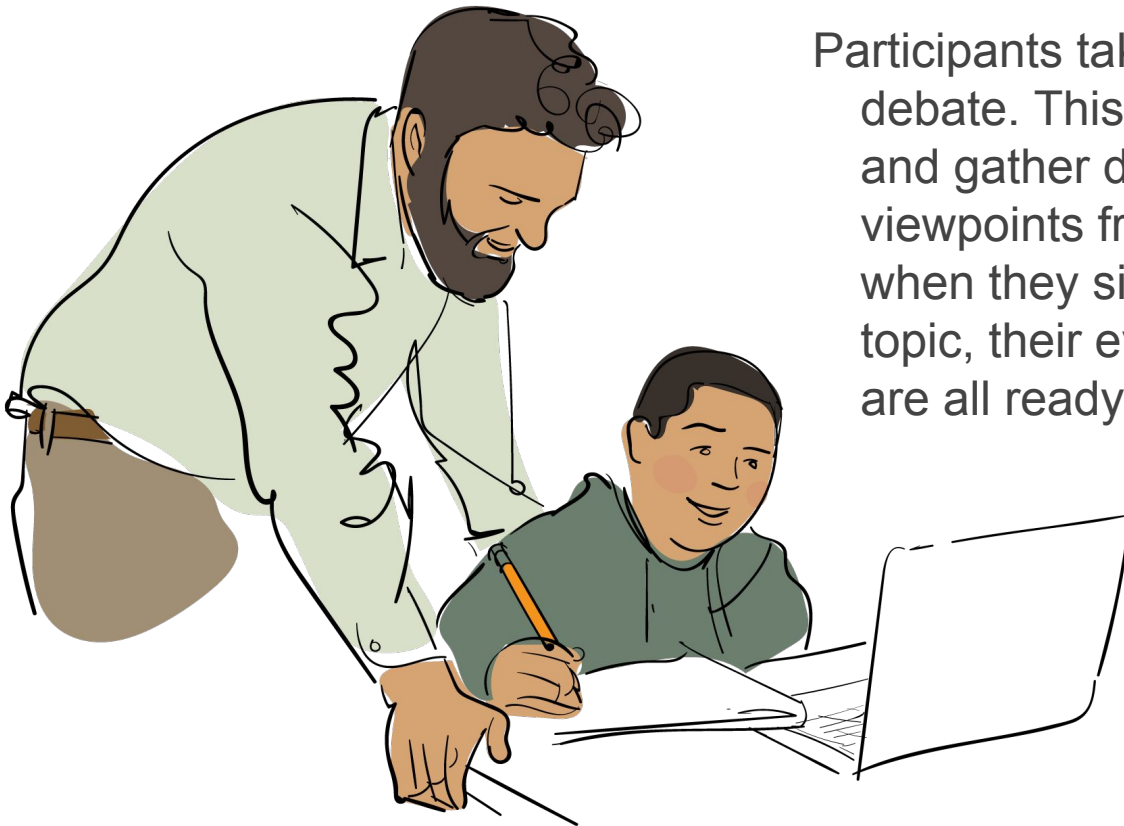
In debate, we form arguments *for* or *against* a central issue or Debate Question.



Debate Helps Us Write

Not only does debate help us become better speakers, but it also helps develop our writing skills.

Participants take careful notes during debate. This helps them think deeply and gather different data or viewpoints from their peers. Then, when they sit down to write about the topic, their evidence and arguments are all ready to go.



Debate Helps You Learn and Decide

U.S. presidents, including Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Obama, have used debate in order to help them understand all of the evidence and make good decisions on behalf of the whole country.



You can use debate the same way--to learn more about a topic and maybe even change your mind about it!

How Does Debate Relate to ThinkCERCA?

Each of the elements of CERCA have a role in a debate.
Each argument presented by a side includes these elements.



Claim



Reasons
Reasoning



Evidence



Counterargument



Audience

How To Play The Debate Game



The Debate Game

In a traditional debate, teams of two or three people debate in front of a group of listeners, who decide who wins the debate.

In the Debate Game, the whole class gets to take part.

How to Play

Players (No. of Speakers)

An entire class can participate. Ideally a debate consists of 2 teams, each with 1-4 speakers.

The Basics

Each team represents different positions on a topic. Team members work together to develop arguments. Teams take turns presenting their arguments to each other.

Teams then develop rebuttals, or counterarguments, and take turns stating their objections to the opposing argument. Each team's goal is to provide a logical and well thought-out response to show that their viewpoint is more convincing than their opponent's.

Object of the Game

The team with the most compelling argument wins. Winners can be determined by a vote once the debate has finished, or discussion may continue afterward.

Setup

Divide the Group into Teams





- Team One develops an argument *for* an idea or taking one specific position
- Team Two develops an argument *against* an idea or taking a different specific position

The Teacher or Moderator selects the main Debate Question or issue, and assigns it to each team.



Part I: Develop Argument

Each team works together to develop an argument in response to the Debate Question.

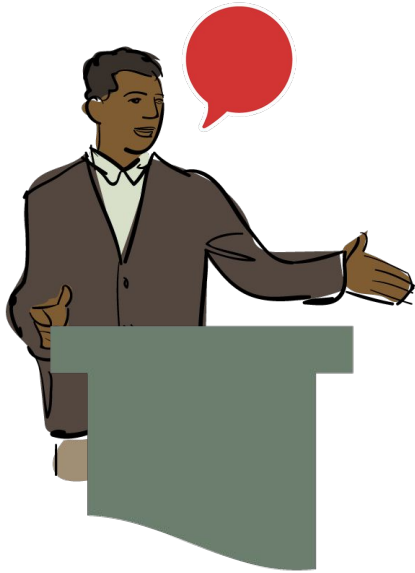
-  Craft a **Claim**
-  Provide **Reasons**
-  Explain **Evidence**
-  Use **Reasoning** to Connect **Evidence** Back to **Claim**



Review the Question

Be sure to read the Debate Question carefully.

The question – exactly as it is stated – is what each team must debate.



For example:

Should students be allowed
to use smartphones in school?



State Claim

Teammates decide on the answer to the Debate Question. The answer is their **claim**.

Each team crafts its argument, taking care that all of their reasons, evidence, and reasoning connect back to and support their **claim**.

Most often, one team will be *for* the issue in the Debate Question, and the other team will be *against* the issue.

For example:

Students [**should** / **should not**] be allowed to use smartphones in school.





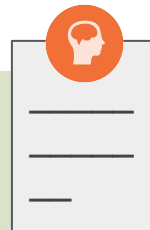
Determine Reasons

Teammates write at least two **reasons** to support their side of the argument.

Remember, **reasons** tell what you think.

For example:

-  Students [*should / should not*] be allowed to use smartphones in
-  school, because [**insert reasons**].



See page 1
of Debate Organizer
(Handout)

Support with Evidence

Teammates look at the available evidence for the debate and work together to determine which pieces of **evidence** support their **reasons**.

For example:

Available Evidence

Smartphones are

1. compact
2. capable of capturing and storing audio, video, and images
3. helpful for sharing information quickly
4. capable of downloading applications



See Evidence
section of Debate
Organizer (Handout)

Use Reasoning to Tie Evidence to the Claim

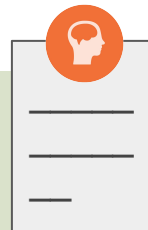
Write your **reasoning** in your chart.

- Remember **reasoning** ties your **evidence** back to your **claim**.
- Reasoning tells why you think as you do.

Write your reasoning and evidence in your chart.

For example:

Because smartphones
are [insert evidence],
[insert reasoning].



See Reasoning section
of Debate Organizer (Handout)

Write a Closing Statement

Each team writes a brief closing to their argument. This is a conclusion that sums up the team's position, and it gives them one last chance to appeal to the audience.



Create a Rebuttal

A rebuttal is like a **counterargument**. Think of the objection first, and then use **evidence** and **reasoning** to show why it is not true or relevant.

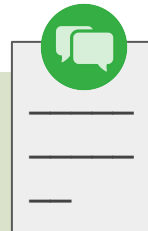


Create a Rebuttal

- Teammates work together to imagine some of the strongest arguments their opponents might have.
- Write these arguments in the corresponding column.

For example:

Students should not use cell phones in school because they can be distracting.



*See Rebuttal section
of Debate Organizer (Handout)*

Create a Rebuttal

Write some rebuttal ideas that address these arguments. Your rebuttal ideas should show that your opponents' arguments are not as strong as yours.

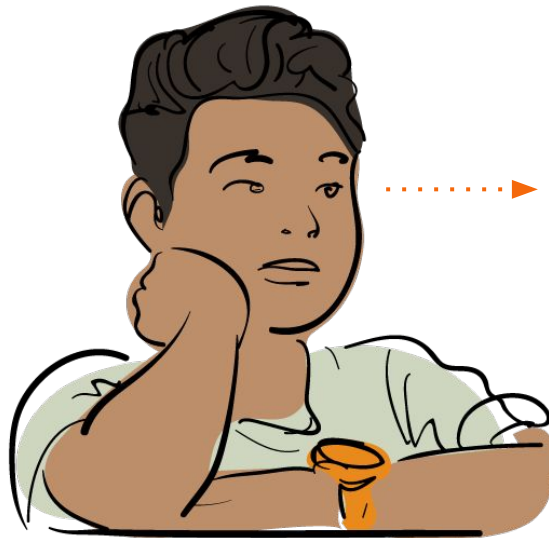
For example:

However, if teachers do a good job of keeping the class on task, this shouldn't be a problem.



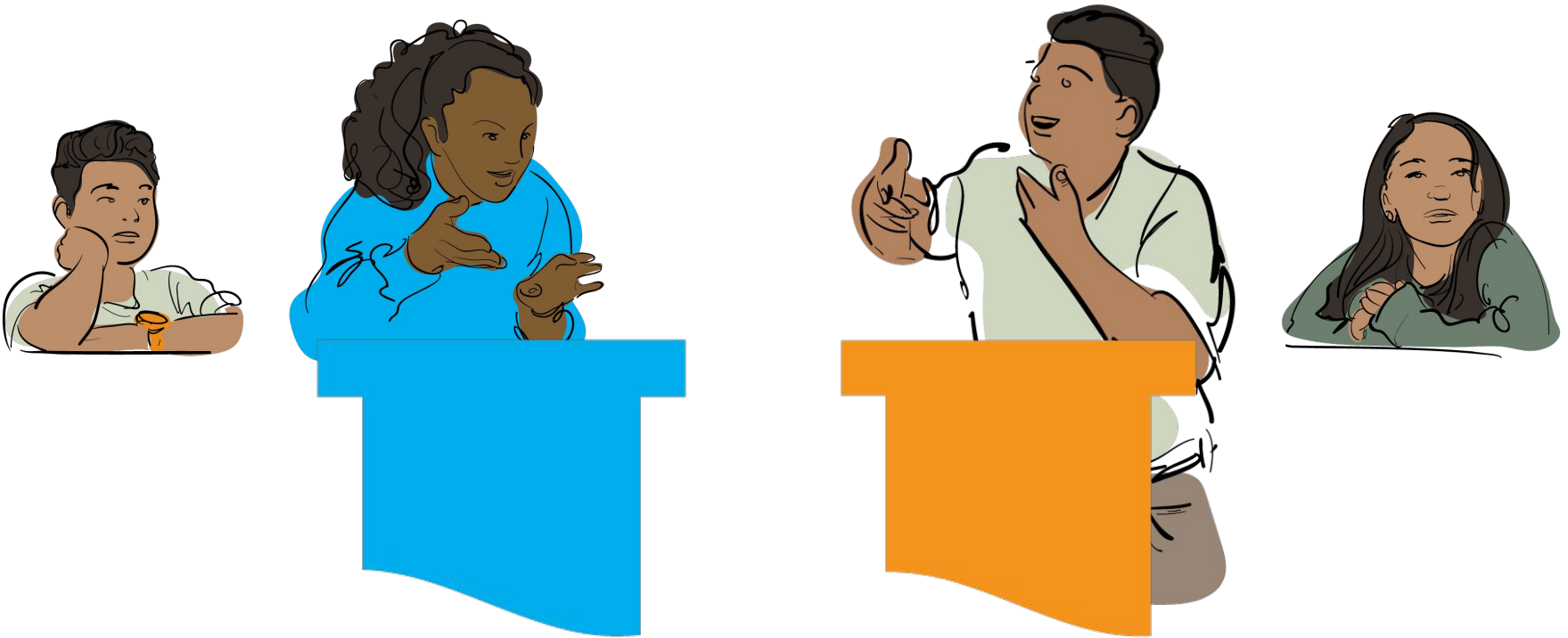
Create a Rebuttal

Remember to listen in the actual debate! Your opponents might have a totally different idea. You are just preparing.



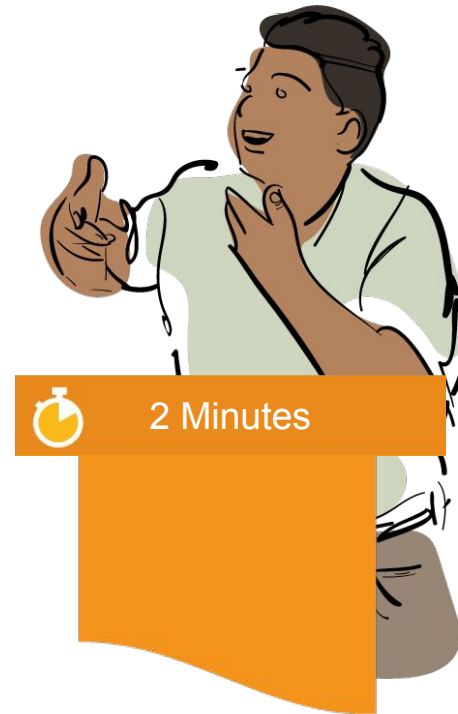
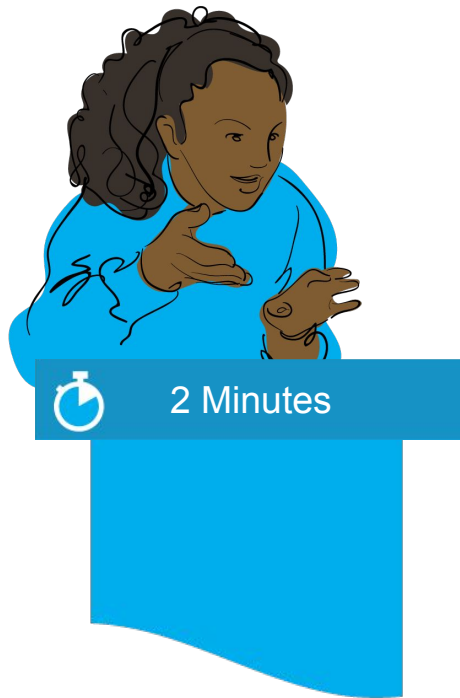
Part II: Debate!

- Two teams debate the topic with carefully timed arguments.
- Each team presents its side in turn, and each team has a chance to offer a rebuttal to the other side. Then each team presents its closing statement.
- A whole class debate can be added as a final step.



Present Arguments

Each team has 2 minutes to present its argument: its claim, reasons, evidence, and reasoning.



Take Notes

- While one team is presenting, the other team should listen carefully and take notes.
- Take notes on your opponent's arguments and their rebuttal to your arguments. Take notes on your own team's arguments and rebuttal, too.
- It can be difficult to listen, take notes, and pay attention to time at the same time! Taking notes immediately after the debate will also help you remember the new information you learned.



Plan Rebuttals

After both teams have presented their arguments, they take 1 minute to plan their rebuttals. To do this, each team finds the strongest argument on the other side and builds a counterargument based on the same set of values.



1 Minute



1 Minute

Check Closing Statements

The teams should take this time to reread their closing statements and make sure they follow easily from their rebuttals. The closing statement should be clear, logical, and convince people that your argument is correct.



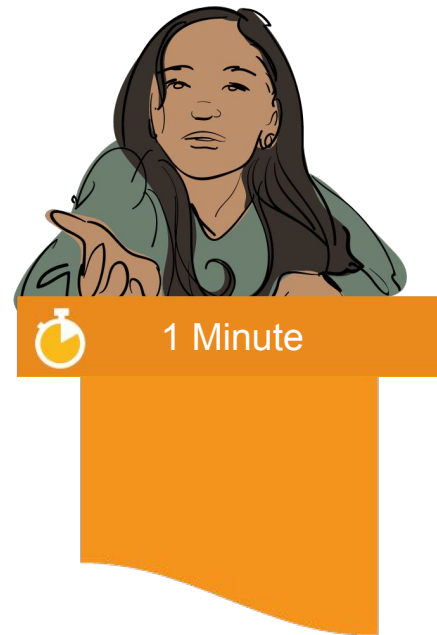
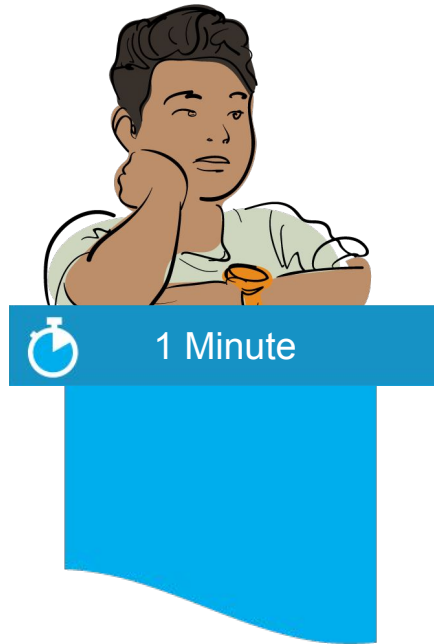
1 Minute



1 Minute

Present Rebuttal & Closing Statement

Each team has 1 minute to present its rebuttal and closing statement.



The Debate Game

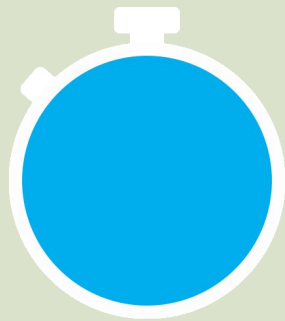


Quick Review

Present Your Arguments

2 minutes each side

Each side has two minutes to present their argument.
The affirmative side goes first.



2 min



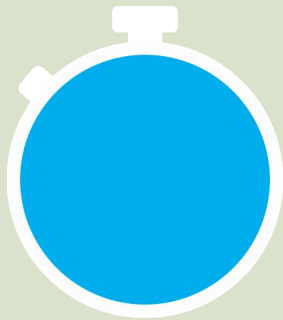
2 min



Prepare Your Rebuttal

1 minute each side

Both sides get one minute to prepare their rebuttal.



1 min



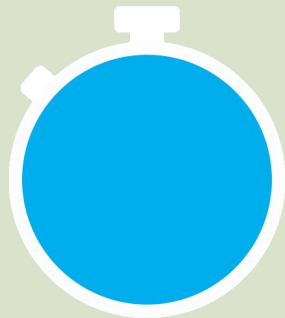
1 min



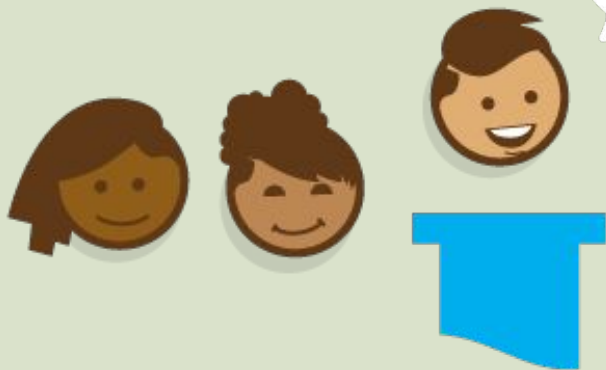
Present Your Rebuttal

1 minute each side

Each side has one minute to deliver a rebuttal and close their argument. The negative side goes first this time.



1 min



1 min



Whole Class Debate Option

First...

After the small-group debate, each side of the argument gathers together, splitting the class in half.

Each two-person team contributes their side's strongest reason, evidence, and reasoning.

Side members evaluate the strongest evidence and rank them into the most effective order.

Whole Class Debate Option

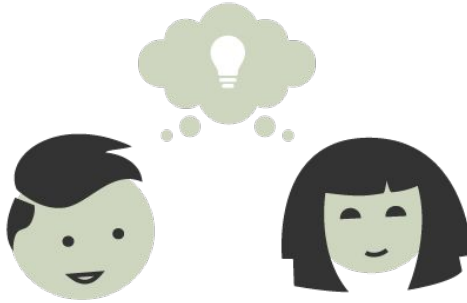
Then...

Repeat the process with counterarguments found in the groups.

One spokesperson for each side will present the new argument in 2 minutes.

One spokesperson for each side will present the rebuttal in one minute.

The class will discuss strongest arguments.



Reflection: From Debate to CERCA



Claim



Reasons
Reasoning



Evidence



Counterargument



Audience

Reflection: A Key Step

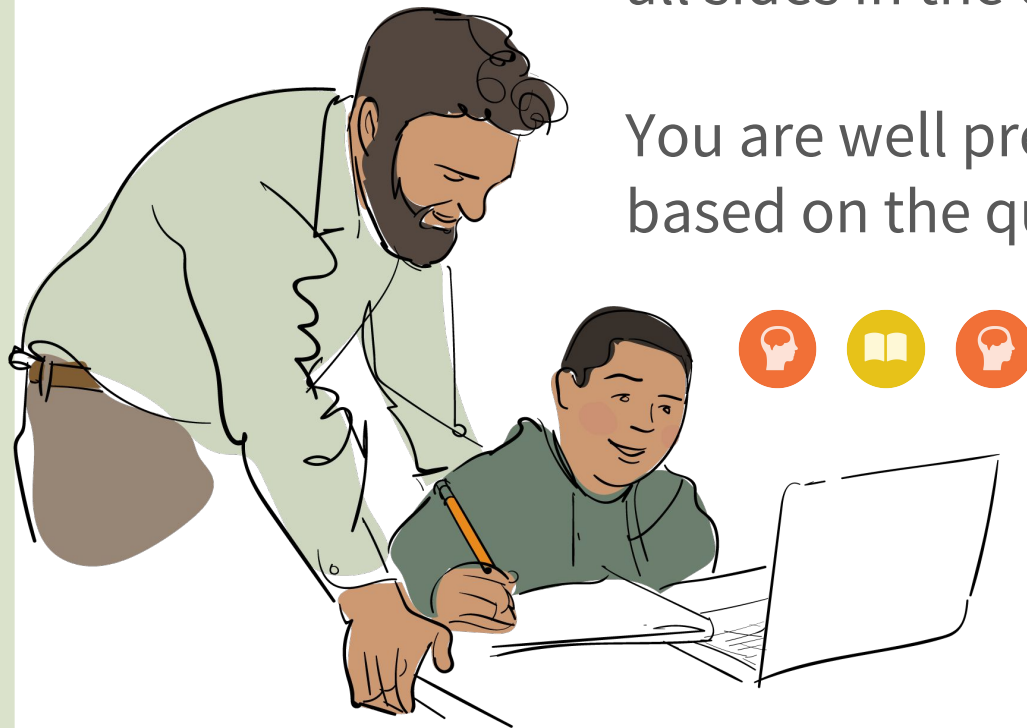
Reflection and discussion are essential for critical thinking and for learning.

- Reflect: What side were you first leaning toward in the debate? Has that changed? What role did your peers have in your learning?
- Discuss: As a class, discuss which arguments were the strongest on both sides during the debate?
- Synthesize: Record your thoughts on page 4 of your handout.

From Oral Argument to Written Argument

Look at your notes. You have plenty of **reasons** and **evidence** from the text about all sides in the debate!

You are well prepared to write your CERCA based on the question you debated.



Sources

Annis LF. 1983. The Processes and Effects of Peer Tutoring. *Human learning: Journal of Practice and Research Applications* 2, no. 1: 39-47.

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