

## How to choose a good topic and question/statement for a debate

In this section we will present guidelines for how to formulate a good debate question. Debate questions are used in the basic 2 on 2 debate format, which you will become familiar with in the next chapter. Other debate formats may also use statements, motions or other kinds of phrases to debate on.

### Think of a relevant general topic:


People usually debate issues that have a particular concern in their societies or surrounding environments at a given time. That's why a good topic for a debate should be relevant for the group of people debating and should come from current affairs. Most debates stem from social, political, moral or economic problems in a particular region.

### Formulate a proper debate question:

When you know the topic you want to hold a debate on, a debate question might naturally come out of it. However, there are some requirements, that you should look at when formulating a proper debate question:

- **The question should begin with should/shall.**  
A good debate question always proposes a motion.
- **It has to be a decision-making question** (Yes or No).  
One must be able to answer the question with yes or no.
- **It should be legally defined** (as much as possible).
- **It has to be a practical question, not technical or theoretical.**  
It should propose concrete measures or regulations. e.g. legalization of same-sex marriage, enforcement of military conscription
- **It should be a positive (not negative) question.**  
The proposition should be able to answer with yes.  
The question should not include the word 'not'.
- **It should be of general interest** (usually political).
- **It should include concrete formulations** (as brief as possible).
- **There should be a balance of pros and cons.**  
Both the proposition and opposition should find arguments to support their statements.
- **The topic should be controversial** in the region, so that the debaters could easily come across pros and cons.

### Some good examples of debate questions:

- Should Lithuania legalize cannabis for recreational use?
  - Should there be unconditional basic income implemented in the EU?
  - Should the voting age be lowered to 16 in the European Parliament elections universally across the EU?
  - Should an independent public broadcaster be established by the European Union?
  - Should same-sex marriage be legalized in Poland?
- 

### Some bad examples of debate questions:

- Why should the European Union build its defense forces?  
*- no proposal, merely asks why; cannot be answered with yes or no.*
  - Should education on sexual harassment be a mandatory part of secondary school curriculum?  
*- it is recommended that debate questions include an exact location*
  - Should NATO not be involved in the Russo-Ukrainian war?  
*- negative question (not)*
  - Should all people obtain higher education?  
*- too theoretical, does not propose concrete measures.*
  - Should women be banned from voting in elections in Canada?  
*- immoral question.*
- 