

An Introduction To Debating



Aim

- What is a debate?
- What are the rules of a debate?
- How is a debate ordered?
- Why is debating important?



What is Debating?

Have you seen or taken part in a debate?

What was it about?

Where did it take place?

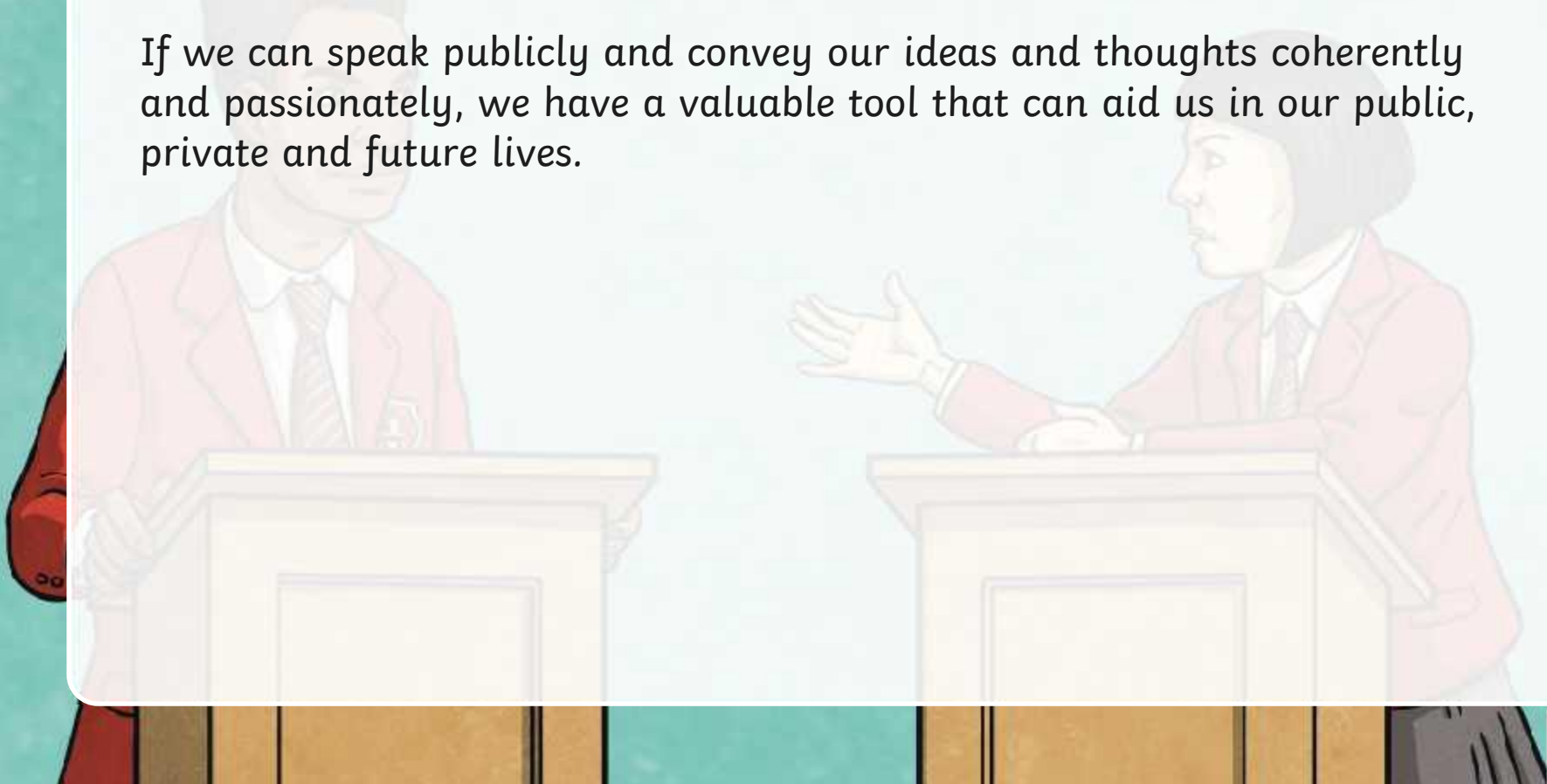
Who was taking part in the debate?



What is debating?

We live in a world where we communicate with others all the time. Debating is a more formal way of communicating. It builds confidence and self-esteem in people.

If we can speak publicly and convey our ideas and thoughts coherently and passionately, we have a valuable tool that can aid us in our public, private and future lives.



Real-Life Debate

Politicians in the House of Commons spend a lot of their time debating what should be made law and other issues affecting the country e.g. how money is spent on schools, hospitals and the police.

A debate is based around a suggestion or motion.

An example of a motion is: 'The voting age should be lowered to 16'.



The people who are arguing to support the motion (usually MPs belonging to the Government in the House of Commons), are called the proposers.

The people arguing against the motion (usually the opposition in the House of Commons), are the opposers.



How to Hold a Debate

1

The opening address

The Speaker opens the meeting, checks who is present and who is able to vote at the debate, then reads out the motion (topic).

2

The main speeches

The **proposer** speaks in favour of the motion.

The **opposer** speaks against the motion

3

Further arguments

Each team takes it in turn to expand on their arguments, sharing specific evidence and building on the information already shared. This continues until **all** members of each team have had their say.

4

Open to the floor

Now the Speaker declares the motion 'open to the floor'.

Anyone in the audience may now speak, either for or against the motion. Anyone who wishes to speak, raises their hand and waits for permission from the Speaker.

An illustration of a man and a woman standing at podiums, likely in a debate or voting session. The man is on the left, wearing a red suit and tie, looking towards the woman. The woman is on the right, wearing a red blazer and a dark skirt, gesturing with her right hand. The background is a light teal color.

5

Summing up

After a balanced debate, the Speaker asks each side to give a summary.

The chair asks the opposer to give a brief summary of why people should vote against the motion.

The proposer is then asked to give a brief summary of why people should vote for the motion.

6

Voting

Finally, a vote is organised.

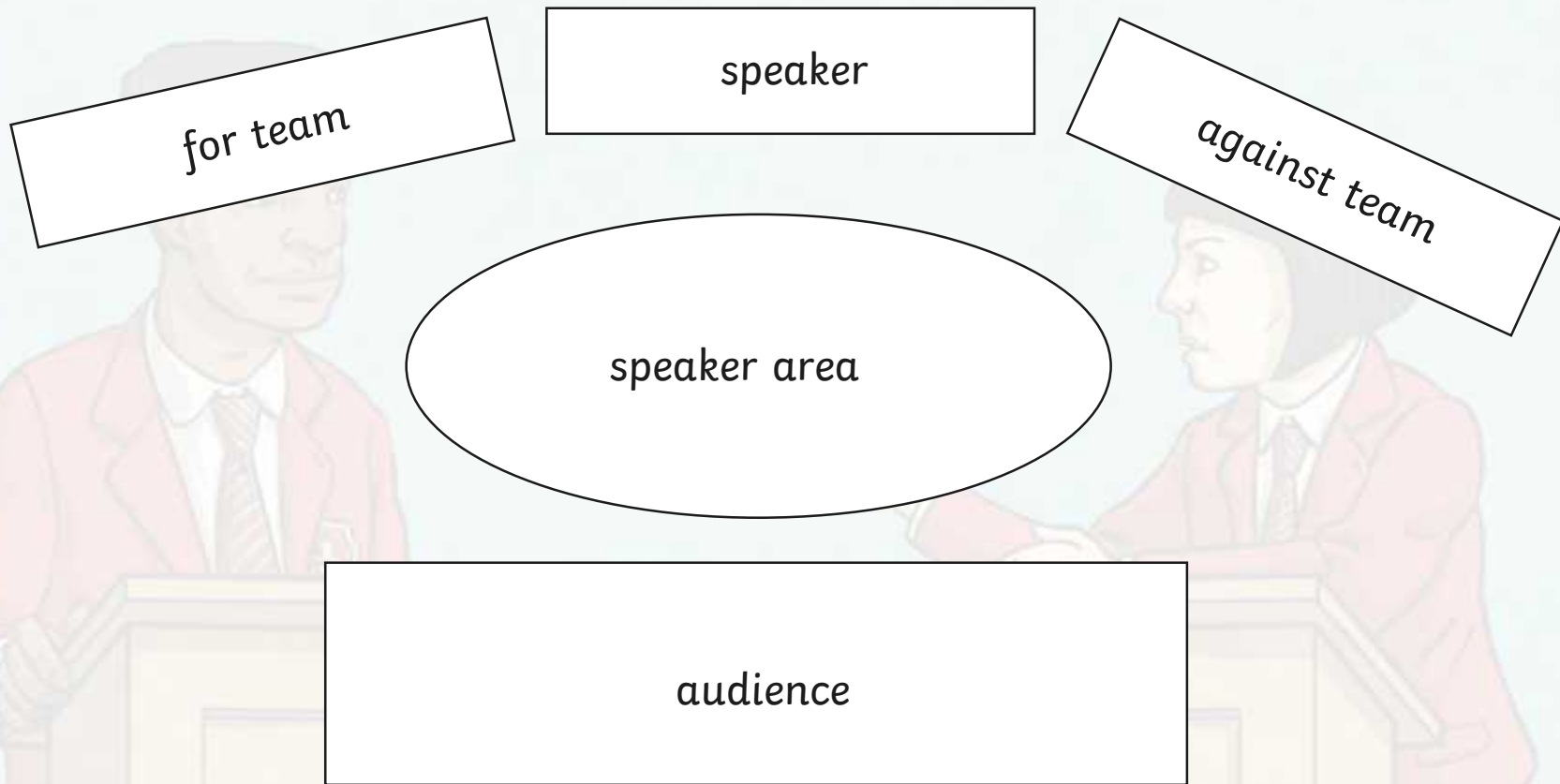
This can be done publicly with a show of hands or by a private ballot. The chair usually decides which method to use.

Debating Rules

- No put downs.
- You must raise your hand if it's not your time to speak.
- Do not interrupt.
- Do not whisper while another speaker is talking.
- The debate is chaired by the Speaker, whose decision on all matters is final.
- Remember - you can only speak **ONCE** during the debate. Your speech should be within the allotted time frame. Make the most of your time by developing an argument instead of making a single point.
- However, you may 'intervene' (question others on points they make) as many times as you like. E.g. Where did you get those statistics?
- You can use notes – both to help you with your speech and to help remember points others have made during the debate.
- If you are an audience member and wish to speak, you must wait until the motion is 'open to the floor' and put up your hand to speak.
- You should tell the Speaker if you spot someone breaking these rules. This is called a point of order.

A Debate Room Layout

A debate is set up as shown in the diagram below



Debating Glossary

Glossary and links

Speaker - the person who controls the debate.

Motion - the viewpoint that is argued for or against.

Proposer - speaks in favour of the motion which, in many cases, they have written.

Opposer - speaks against the motion after the proposer has made their speech.

Abstain - if you don't vote either for or against the motion, you are said to abstain. This may be because you can't make up your mind or disagree with both opposing views.

House - the name for the room where the debate has taken place and its members.

