

## **ARGUMENT BOXING: THE FORMAT**

Argument Boxing is an argument-based, whole-class activity that activates and exercises the critical thinking, close reading, reasoning, and communication skills of robust argument-centered instruction.

This format can be built around a binary debatable issue, one that students have read about, studied, and perhaps researched already.

The class should be divided into two sides. Each side should be assigned a position on the debatable issue, and each side should build two arguments to support their position. Each argument should have two pieces of evidence supporting the claim, with reasoning analyzing how the evidence proves the argument and advances the position. Some time should be allocated, too, for the consideration of what the other side is going to argue, and how to counter-argue against that.

With these preparatory steps taken care of, the Argument Boxing Activity is ready to begin.

You should divide a large white board, or smartboard screen, into four equal boxes. One opening argument will be placed within each box.

The timings and sequence of the Argument Boxing format are as follows.

<b>Arguments</b>	<b>10 Minutes</b>
<b>Counter-Arguments</b>	<b>10 Minutes</b>
<b>Open</b>	<b>10 Minutes</b>
<b>Final Argument Evaluation</b>	<b>5 Minutes</b>

The key to making Argument Boxing work is in tracking the arguments in the four boxes. Initially, each of the four arguments (two developing each position: two per side) is written as the heading in each box. If the evidence and reasoning is especially strong, it should be summarized



below the heading. Then, for the rest of the activity, whenever a new instance of refutation (beginning with a counter-argument) is raised by other side, that argumentation should be summarized in the appropriate box. Everyone in the debate can see how the arguments are being developed, refuted, defended, lost, or won.

In the counter-argument period, only arguments that directly respond to one of the opening four arguments are permitted. Anything that is a response to a counter-argument is not yet allowed. And after the opening four arguments, no “new” arguments are permitted at all during any stage of the debate.

In the open period, anyone can speak on any of the previous arguments, and their evidence and reasoning. In the final evaluation, speakers attempt to put the arguments together, to synthesize the arguments, in such a way that either reaches a preferable middle ground, or continues to favor their original position while still making some appropriate concessions.

Here are several important additional format items.

- You should only track arguments in the four boxes that are responsive, supported, and new, i.e., that haven’t already been said. Do not write redundant, duplicative arguments in the boxes, even if they are differently worded.
- After each argument, include the name of the arguer in parenthesis.
- For an especially strong argument, in its evidence, reasoning, or critical thinking content, add a “+1” or “+2” next the arguer’s name.
- No one can speak more than three times during the entire activity until everyone on their side has spoken twice. The opening arguments should be delivered by two different arguers on each side. This counts as one of their three times to speak.
- You should assess based on total points for each student, multiplied by either 5 or 10, depending on the importance of the activity in the unit. You can name a winning side, whose students can all receive a bonus of 5 points.
- You should review the argumentation to identify which arguments prevailed as the strongest and most durable in the face of refutation.