

LONDON DEBATE CHALLENGE MOTION FACT FILES



Motion 1: This House Would Ban Smoking

Some background information

Smoking is a major public health problem in the UK. It is very addictive and can lead to a wide range of serious illnesses. Despite this a significant proportion of the population still smoke. In recent years the government has increasingly restricted smoking, clamping down on advertising, raising the age at which tobacco products can be bought, banning smoking in public areas and more. These measures have reduced the number of smokers somewhat.

Many campaigners feel that the government should go even further and ban tobacco products completely. There are concerns with this position, however. Many argue that the government shouldn't stop people making choices, even if those choices aren't the best for them. There are other worries about creating a black market - prohibition of drugs and alcohol has often resulted in wide sales of illegal, unregulated products. These may be even more harmful, and the money used to fund organised crime.

There is no easy answer to the problems of tobacco. What do you think we should do?

Key facts

- Around 16% of adults in the UK smoke - nearly 7.6 million people
- Around 100,000 deaths each year are attributable to smoking
- The government spends £4.5 billion each year as a result of smoking, and raises £9.5 billion in extra taxes

Activities for the class or club

Do these situations really give you a full and fair choice? If not, why not?

Try to compose a list of factors that we need to think about when asking if choices are OK.

You are very ill and a doctor offers you a choice between an experimental drug and a new type of surgery. "Quickly," she says, "You need to choose now. Well, what will we do, A or B?"

Someone has a gun to your head and says they'll shoot you unless you eat some cake.

You are penniless and starving. Someone offers you £20 to let them punch you in the face.





One of the group injures the leg and you need to decide how to treat it.
The wound becomes badly infected and they are slowing you down as you desperately hunt for water. You need to decide whether to leave them behind or risk taking them along.
You need to decide who will keep watch at night. Some people don't want to interrupt their sleep.
You need to choose a location to set up camp. One choice has nice views. Another seems to have fertile soil.
You see some other people. Some of your group think they look hostile. Do you try to talk to them?

Discuss as a class where on the line people felt each decision should lie - why did they make these choices?

Questions for students to ask themselves

What special skills/attributes do politicians have, and what special skills/attributes does a panel of experts have?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being (a) accountable to the public or (b) an education expert when making education policy decisions?

Can you think of some examples of education policy decisions that (a) education experts and (b) politicians would and wouldn't make?

Some further resources

telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11470046/Pupils-struggling-to-keep-up-with-education-changes-headteachers-warn.html

epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/free-schools-england/

nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/24iht-letter24.html



