

Dialogue Versus Debate

Crucial to successful Socratic Seminars is an understanding of the difference between dialogue and debate. Both the leader and the participants must be able to make this distinction. More importantly, students must understand why we value the dialogue that we seek through Socratic Seminars. The purpose of the seminar is to expand our ideas and deepen our thinking, not to come to a particular conclusion or any conclusion at all. Use the table below to lead a discussion of the difference between these two concepts.

Dialogue is...

- everyone working together
- seeing how other perspectives mesh with your own
- about seeking understanding
- re-evaluating your own assumptions
- open-ended
- validating others' thoughts and opinions

Debate is...

- oppositional
- showing how other perspectives are different from your own
- about defending your stance
- justifying your assumptions
- trying to bring a conclusion
- proving others' positions wrong