



SPEAKING SEATS

AIM OF ACTIVITY: To engage students with various perspectives on controversial issues

TIME REQUIRED: 30 mins

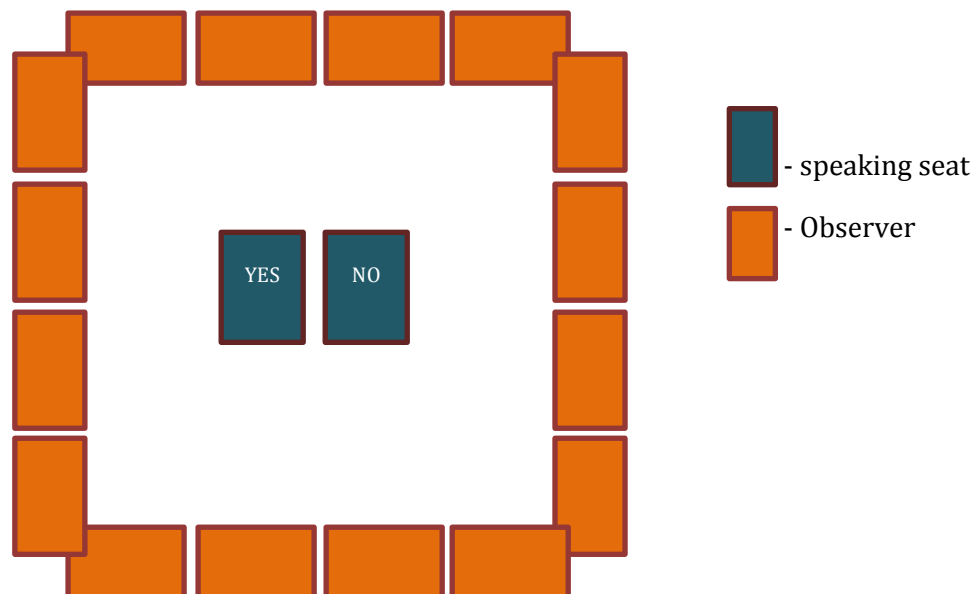
MATERIALS NEEDED: Chairs

SET UP:

- Arrange 2 'Speaking' seats- back to back in the middle of the room. One Seat Should Be marked 'Yes', and the other marked 'No'
- Arrange 'Observer Seats' on the outside, around the two 'Speaking Seats', like a viewing gallery

TEACHER NOTE:

- Each 'Speaking Seat' is intended for students to debate points of view on a specific issue. You can choose to Debate on any issue - maybe something students have been exploring in class or maybe a sensitive/controversial issue. Either way it should be a statement that allows for a Yes and a No argument. Examples available below
- Make sure students know they won't be judged on what they discuss, and that this is an opportunity to talk through some 'big issues' in a safe way





STEPS PART A:

- Explain the rules of Speaking Seats
- Remind students that the structure is there to help make it more enjoyable for everyone

RULES:

You will be allocated a turn to occupy a Speaking Seat. The seat will either be a **Yes Seat** or a **No Seat**.

When you are not in the **Speaking Seat**, you must occupy an **Observer Seat**, and listen attentively.

When it is your turn to occupy the Speaking Seat, you will have to argue from that seat's point of view... even if you don't believe in what you are saying!

All seats get 30 seconds to speak through you, imagine you are the voice of the chair!

30 seconds will be timed and the teacher will 'call time' at the end of each 30 second burst.

* You might be thinking lots of things as your friends are on the speaking seats but please *listen* for now- at the end, you'll have a chance to speak about some of the issues, and have a conversation about your thoughts.

DEBATE EXAMPLES:

Examples for KS1-KS2 (Primary)	Examples for KS2-KS4, Junior Cycle, Post-Primary
This is a nice place to live	Homelessness is not a problem in our town/city
I can care about people I have never met	Everyone should be free to love whoever they want
Everyone in Ireland has a home	I can care about people I've never met, or ever will.
Our Earth needs to be protected by us all	People fleeing from war should be offered safety in NI/ROI
When there is a war in a country, the people who are being harmed should be able to move to a safer country	I can trust information given to me by the media
Children can make the world a fairer place for everyone	Young people can make the world a fairer place
Happiness is more important than exams	Religion shouldn't be taught in schools
Owning lots of stuff is what makes you happy	If coal mining can provide jobs, we should welcome companies to Northern Ireland; despite the abuse it causes the land
Taking care of our earth is more important than digging for gold	Taking care of our earth is more important than digging for gold



STEPS PART B:

- After the 'Speaking Seats' have had a chance to debate the statements, invite everyone to sit in a circle to bring life to the students thoughts and encourage dialogue on the issues
- You might want to invite students shake down/out... to physically get out of the character of the 'Speaking Seat'

Some notes/question to consider during the facilitated dialogue:

- ✿ We've heard lots of different ideas/opinions through the seats, how might these opinions/ideas be formed?
- ✿ Where do we learn some of the things we believe?
- ✿ How can we learn new ways of thinking about the issues?
- ✿ Why might some people, organisations and/or the media want us to believe a certain thing?
- ✿ Can we learn how to think about the issues in ways that are more compassionate and kind for everybody?

TO DIFFERENTIATE OR DEVELOP THIS ACTIVITY YOU CAN:

KS1/KS2/Primary

Ask students to find out one fact and one opinion on any issue

KS3/KS4/Junior Cycle/Post-Primary

Ask students to write an assignment with various perspectives on an issue