

# DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTER

## Marine Mammal Law Debates

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**Grade Level:** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>

**Objectives:** Students will be able to understand the positive and negative consequences of human actions on Earth's systems. Students will also be able to understand how laws are developed, implemented and enforced. Students will be able to practice formulating an organized argument, anticipating opposing views, preparing counter-arguments, and presenting these arguments and counter-arguments to an audience of their peers.

### **Florida Sunshine State Standards:**

#### **Science**

SC.G.2.3.4 The student understands that humans are a part of an ecosystem and their activities may deliberately or inadvertently alter the equilibrium in ecosystems.

#### **Language Arts**

L.A.C.3.3.3 The student speaks for various occasions, audiences, and purposes, including conversations, discussions, projects, and informational, persuasive, or technical presentations.

#### **Social Studies**

SS.B.2.3.6 The student understands the environmental consequences of people changing the physical environment in various world locations.

SS.C.1.3.2 The student understands major ideas about why government is necessary and the purposes government should serve.

### **National Science Education Standards:**

**Content Standard F (5-8) - Science and Technology in Society:** Science influences society through its knowledge and worldview. Scientific knowledge and the procedures used by scientists influence the way many individuals in society think about themselves, others, and the environment. The effect of science on society is neither entirely beneficial nor entirely detrimental.

**Background:** Debates are an excellent way to expose students to real world questions in an arena similar to that of a courtroom or U.S. Congress. There are a variety of debate formats that can be used in the classroom. The Lincoln-Douglas debate is often referred to as a 'values' debate. In this style of debate, participants argue the philosophical points of the resolution, but do not need to present a workable plan for the government to implement. This is a one-on-one debate, modeled after the famous debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. The policy debate is another debate style, and usually involves two teams each with two members. In a policy debate, participants argue the practical applications of governmental policies. Parliamentary debate is a third type of debate that combines elements from the Lincoln-Douglas debate and the policy debate. The parliamentary debate is modeled after the British House of Commons, and one team represents the Government and the other represents Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.



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Participants use a combination of policy and philosophy arguments. While there are other types of debates, these are some of the more common styles.

This lesson utilizes the policy debate. This style of debate includes arguments that have been thoroughly researched. The topic or resolution to be debated should be phrased as a statement, and be contrary to the status quo. For example, if your school does not currently require students to wear uniforms, the resolution would be phrased: “Resolved: Students should be required to wear uniforms to school”.

Once the resolutions have been determined, teams must then be assigned a resolution to debate. It is important for participants to understand that the debating process is about presenting the affirmative or negative position and not about expressing opinions. The team assigned to argue in favor of the resolution and advocate change is the affirmative team. The team assigned to argue against the resolution and maintain the status quo is the negative team. After being assigned to one of these teams, participants are allowed time to research and develop their arguments. The suggested format for a middle school debate is as follows:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative Constructive Speech (5 min.)
  - A pre-written speech that introduces the affirmative team, states the resolution, describes how the status quo is harmful, and presents a plan to solve the problem.
2. 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative Cross-Examination (2 min.)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> affirmative is questioned by 2<sup>nd</sup> negative speaker—An opportunity for the negative team to question the 1<sup>st</sup> affirmative speaker and expose problems or weaknesses with the proposed plan. The 2<sup>nd</sup> negative speaker may only ask question, not make statements.
3. 1<sup>st</sup> Negative Constructive Speech (5 min.)
  - A speech that shows there is no harm with the status quo, and that existing laws do not have to change.
4. 1<sup>st</sup> Negative Cross-Examination (2 min.)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Negative is questioned by 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative speaker
5. 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Constructive Speech (5 min.)
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> affirmative speaker further builds the case that the status quo is unacceptable and the negative points are weak.
6. 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Cross-Examination (2 min.)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative is questioned by 1<sup>st</sup> Negative speaker
7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Constructive Speech (5 min.)
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> negative speaker shows how the affirmative’s plan does not solve the problem at hand, and explains the disadvantages of the proposal.
8. 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Cross-Examination (2 min.)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative is questioned by 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Speaker (2 min.)
9. 1<sup>st</sup> Negative Rebuttal (3 min.)
  - This rebuttal should attack the affirmative’s argument, include additional evidence to strengthen the negative’s position, and summarize their argument.



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10. 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal (3 min.)
  - Refutes the arguments made by the negative, summarizes the affirmative's case, and points out weaknesses in the negative's case.
11. 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Rebuttal (3 min.)
  - Concludes the negative position by summarizing the negative's argument and calling for rejection of the resolution.
12. 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal (3 min.)
  - Concludes the debate by summarizing the affirmative's argument and calling for acceptance of the resolution.

This debate is based on the format often used for high school debates, but the allotted times have been modified for middle school students. This format may be modified to meet the needs and the skill level of your students.

In this lesson, students will be debating various policies regarding marine mammals. Marine mammal law came into the spotlight during the 1960s and 1970s as a variety of issues began to draw public attention. Current legislation involving marine mammals includes the Animal Welfare Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Refer to the information files on **Recent Legislation** and **Endangered Species**.

## Materials:

For each group:

- Resources for researching topics

For each student:

- Debate Rubric (Selected from the website listed below or of your own creation!)

**Teacher Prep Notes:** Students will need to be divided into debate groups of four students. Assess the debate format provided above. If necessary, modify the format to meet the needs of your students. One good place to find information on debates is the debate lesson plan on the *Education World* website

([http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml)). You will be able to find a variety of rubrics there as well.

Students will need access to resources in order to research their topics. Students may do their own research at the library using books and/or the Internet. If so, make sure to pre-arrange times for your students to work in the media center or computer lab. Alternatively, you may want to provide students with resources to use in the classroom. Suggested resources are included below.

For the actual debate, arrange desks so the debaters are able to see each other as well as the class. (A chevron shape at the front of the room works well.) If you plan to have the students score each other, make sure they have a copy of the rubric you have selected as well as paper to record scores.



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## Procedures:

1. Ask the class to generate a list of controversial topics relating to marine mammals.
2. Ask students to share some opinions about the topics that they have mentioned. Students may have some very defined opinions on the subjects. However, there are two sides to every issue, and this activity will expose students to some of those other viewpoints!
3. Inform the students that they will be debating about controversial topics about marine mammals. Students will need to understand that the debates will be about facts, not personal attacks. In addition, students should be aware of the fact that they will not expressing their opinions in the debate; instead, they will present an affirmative or negative position. To emphasize this point, students will not be allowed to choose what topic they will argue, or if they will be on the pro or con side.
4. Outline for the students the debate format that they will follow, and provide each student with a rubric so that they know how they will be evaluated throughout the activity.
5. Familiarize students with the topics below, discussing any vocabulary words that the students do not yet know. (You may also want to use topics that the students brought up at the beginning of the class in addition to or instead of the topics listed below.)
  - Resolved: The international ban on whaling should be lifted.
  - Resolved: It should be illegal for humans to swim with dolphins in the wild.
  - Resolved: Marine mammal populations should be culled to increase fishermen's catch.
  - Resolved: It should be legal for tuna fisherman to encircle dolphins when catching tuna.
  - Resolved: Time and money should not be spent attempting to rescue and rehabilitate stranded marine mammals.
  - Resolved: The U.S. Navy should not be allowed to use Low Frequency Active Sonar in the world's oceans.
  - Resolved: Fishermen should not be allowed to use gill nets to catch fish.
  - Resolved: All trawl nets should be fitted with turtle excluder devices.
6. Divide students into pairs. Assign each pair one side of a topic to argue. You can do this ahead of time, or have students randomly draw their topics out of a hat.
7. Once students have been given their topics, allow sufficient time to research and prepare their arguments. The allotted time for research will depend on the amount of detail and supporting evidence required by the rubric being used.
8. During the actual debates, the instructor will act as the moderator. Ensure that students speak in a professional manner and follow the format provided. Keep time on your own, or assign a student to act as the timekeeper.
9. It is important to allow students to participate in a discussion at the conclusion of each debate. This will provide time for all students to voice opinions, but it will be especially beneficial for the students who did not agree with the position they were assigned in the debate.



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**Wrap Up:** Ask students to write a summary of one of the debates they watched. They should include all major points made by both the affirmative and the negative sides. Students should include their opinion on the topic prior to the debate, and how that opinion may have changed after hearing both sides.

## Taking it Further:

- Have students participate in debate tournaments.
- Have students write letters to government officials on the debate topics.

## Resources:

This is just a brief listing of good places to begin researching debate topics – many more resources are available!

- Dolphin Research Center's **Relevant Legislation** information file.
- NOAA's National Marine Mammal Laboratory—Laws Affecting Marine Mammals  
<http://nmml.afsc.noaa.gov/Laws.HTM>
- NOAA's Office of Protected Resources <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/>
- Missouri Botanical Gardens <http://mbgnet.mobot.org/salt/oceans/dolphin.htm>
- Defenders of Wildlife <http://www.kidsplanet.org/dolphincontest/winners/winners.html>
- American Cetacean Society "Issues" Page <http://www.acsonline.org/issues/index.html>

