



A Teacher-Directed Website

C-SPAN CLASSROOM DELIBERATIONS

Take a Stand

Purpose: To gauge student opinions and background knowledge on a deliberation question before and/or after learning both sides of the issue. This protocol may be used as a warm-up activity to generate student interest in the issue before they watch C-SPAN videos and read related articles; it may be used again after other learning activities as a culminating activity to quickly assess student learning and see if their opinions changed based on what they learned.

Directions:

1. **Post a sign** that says “YES/ AGREE” on one side of the room and a sign that says “NO/ DISAGREE” on the opposite side of the room before students enter.

2. **Clearly state the deliberation question and write it on the board.** Make sure everyone understands the question, but do not provide much background information or support for either position at this point.

For example, if the question is “Should Congress pass a balanced budget amendment?,” make sure everyone knows what a Constitutional amendment is, what a balanced budget is, and that the Constitution does not currently require balanced federal budgets. Do not, however, elaborate on arguments for or against passage. This way you can assess how much background knowledge students have on the topic before they learn more.

3. **Tell students to write down their answer** to the question with one supporting argument. This gives students time to think about the question and decide which side to stand on before seeing what other students think.

4. **Restate the question and tell students to “take a stand”** by getting up and moving towards either the YES or NO sign on

opposite sides of the room. You may allow students to be in the middle if they lack the background knowledge to decide.

5. **Ask individual students** from each side to share their supporting arguments and briefly explain why they answered the question as they did. If you are using this activity as a warm-up before learning about the issue, remind students that they will learn more about this issue by watching C-SPAN videos and reading articles in class, so it's OK if they don't have much evidence to support their position at this point.

6. **Debrief** the activity and discuss the importance of keeping an open mind and changing their opinions as they learn more about the issue.