

Philosophical Chairs: Directions for Students

Students with opposing views on the issue sit facing each other across the center of the room. Students who do not have a position sit in the “neutral zone,” the bottom of the U formation.

All students:

- Address each other by first names.
- Think before you speak. Organize your thoughts. Give verbal clues to your listeners (“I have three points.”)
- Address the ideas, not the person.
- Listen when others are speaking—don’t interrupt.
- Move if your view changes based on the arguments you hear.

Students on the sides of the U:

One student will begin by explaining why he/she is taking the pro/con position. The conversation will then go back and forth from side to side. Keep in mind these rules:

- Before beginning your own comments, you must briefly summarize the previous speaker’s points to that speaker’s satisfaction.
- After you speak, you must wait until two other students on your side have spoken before you can speak again. Be sensitive to getting all students on your side an opportunity to speak.

At the end of the discussion, one student from each team will summarize the viewpoints presented during the discussion by his/her team.

Students in the neutral zone:

Students in the neutral zone must take notes on both sides of the argument. You can also ask questions during the discussion. At the end of the discussion, you will be asked to explain what arguments, if any, caused you to change your position.