

The Brexit debate – Should we stay or should we go?

Time 30-60 minutes
Interaction groupwork / whole class
Level B1 (Intermediate) to C1 (Advanced)

Language areas practised

Sub-skills and Functions

- participating effectively in a debate
- agreeing and disagreeing in a public context

Grammar and Lexis

- future predictions (especially with *will*)
- second conditional (if the UK left Europe...)
- economics and politics

Preparation

Photocopy the information sheets for the 'Stay in Europe' and 'Leave Europe' teams (1 per 2-3 students), and the Useful expressions handout below (one per pair). If your learners don't have access to Internet in class, and you want to provide more ideas for their arguments, you could also find and copy relevant articles for and against the UK staying in the EU.

Procedure

1. Begin by finding out what your learners know about the UK EU referendum (often called 'Brexit' from the words 'Britain' and 'exit') that takes place on 23 June 2016. Introduce the debate, and if necessary teach any difficult language from the information sheets (e.g. trade, taxes, law, increase, decrease, influence, citizens, ally, immigration).

2. Divide the learners into two groups, one for leaving Europe, and the other for remaining in Europe. You could either choose yourself who to put in each team (useful if you want to balance both strong and weak speakers in the teams), or let them decide which team they prefer to be in, and then balance the groups as necessary.

3. Hand out the relevant information sheets to both groups and allow them to read through. You may want to give them the Useful expressions handout now, or wait until just before the debate. Don't forget to model appropriate intonation patterns when showing learners how to use these expressions.

4. Tell the learners how much time they have for each stage in the debate, and get them to make notes in the table at the top of their handout. This will depend on how much time you have, but suggested times are as follows (in minutes): 10-20 preparation; 3-5 opening speeches; 10-20 open debate; 2-3 closing speeches; 5 teacher feedback and decision.

5. Let them begin preparation. They may need help to find relevant, non-technical texts on the debate online; the BBC website is a good resource for this.

6. During the debate, it's probably best if you take the role of Chair and ensure that the balance of speaking time is shared between both sides and all the learners. This will also enable you to keep control of the more forceful speakers!

7. At the end, begin by providing praise, and then feedback to both sides on their performance (they will listen carefully if you do this before the verdict), and then tell them your decision.

The Brexit debate: Useful expressions for a debate

Disagreeing respectfully

I'm afraid... you don't have your facts right.
 you're simply wrong about that.
 that's not true.

Maintaining control

Sorry, could you let me finish, please?
 Please don't interrupt me.

Appealing to fact/evidence

The truth is that...
 Actually,... In reality,...

Criticising your opponent's arguments

Yes, but what you have forgotten to mention is that...
 I'm afraid, you haven't answered my question / addressed the problem of...
 But that's a minor point, compared to...
 But that doesn't happen in practice!

Changing the topic

What about...?
 We haven't mentioned... yet.
 Another advantage/disadvantage to being in the EU is that...

The Brexit debate: 'Stay in Europe' team



You will participate in a debate on the question:

- **Should Britain stay in the European Union or leave it?**

Your team must try to convince the teacher that the UK should stay in Europe. Your teacher will provide timings for the following five stages to the debate. Write the timings in the boxes provided:

Time	Stage
	Both teams prepare for the debate. It may be a good idea for group members to choose different arguments, and prepare what they will say. You can also research your arguments further if you have access to the Internet or relevant newspaper articles.
	One member of each team presents a short opening speech, covering their main arguments. The other team cannot interrupt the opening speeches.
	Both teams participate in an open debate, in which they are allowed to disagree respectfully, interrupt each other tactfully, and respond to individual arguments.
	One member of each team presents a closing speech, this time focusing on the most important topics discussed in the debate, and why their arguments are strongest.
	Your teacher will provide feedback to both groups and decide who has won the debate.

Remember that you should involve all group members both in preparation and in the debate itself. Here is a summary of the key arguments in support of the UK staying in Europe:

Easier trade with Europe	Trade with Europe is worth £400 billion a year (52% of UK international trade in total). If the UK left Europe, this would decrease because the UK would no longer be part of the free-trade zone and trade would become more expensive (e.g. taxes). It is difficult to estimate how much, as this will depend on individual agreements negotiated with separate countries, which will take time, so it may cost UK businesses a lot of money in lost trade.
Less influence on European policy	Norway is outside the EU, but in order to trade with the EU, they still have to follow European laws on their products. However, they have no influence on political decisions made in Brussels. The UK would find itself in a similar position, locked out of the room where the decisions are made, but still dependent on those decisions.
Less freedom for UK citizens	UK citizens would need passports to travel in Europe, and more importantly, they would need special permission to work in European countries. They may have to pay extra costs on property they own in Europe (e.g. Spain and France, where many UK citizens have second homes).
Less influence in the world	As one of the main countries in the EU, the UK is able to play an important part in international decision-making (e.g. at the United Nations). Many countries see the UK as an important ally, so they like to maintain good relations with the UK. If the UK were outside of the EU, they would have less influence, and other countries would care less about staying friends with the UK.

The Brexit debate: 'Leave Europe' Team



You will participate in a debate on the question:

- **Should Britain stay in the European Union or leave it?**

Your team must try to convince the teacher that the UK should leave Europe. Your teacher will provide timings for the following five stages to the debate. Write the timings in the boxes provided:

Time	Stage
	Both teams prepare for the debate. It may be a good idea for group members to choose different arguments, and prepare what they will say. You can also research your arguments further if you have access to the Internet or relevant newspaper articles.
	One member of each team presents a short opening speech, covering their main arguments. The other team cannot interrupt the opening speeches.
	Both teams participate in an open debate, in which they are allowed to disagree respectfully, interrupt each other tactfully, and respond to individual arguments.
	One member of each team presents a closing speech, this time focusing on the most important topics discussed in the debate, and why their arguments are strongest.
	Your teacher will provide feedback to both groups and decide who has won the debate.

Remember that you should involve all group members both in preparation and in the debate itself. Here is a summary of the key arguments in support of the UK leaving Europe:

Greater freedom for UK companies	Over 90% of the UK economy is not involved in trade with the EU, yet all UK companies have to follow European Union rules. If the UK weren't in Europe, these companies would be free to do whatever they wanted in order to increase sales. One organisation estimates that 1 million British jobs could be created if the UK left the EU.
Less tax to pay	The UK pays over £8 billion every year into the EU budget. Other expenses caused by waste, bureaucracy and delays cost much more (one British politician estimated £65 billion a year).
More control on immigration	If the UK were out of Europe, they would have complete control over immigration, and would be able to stop people coming to the UK to take jobs from British people. Also, some immigrants don't find work, but they take money from the government (e.g. unemployment benefit, housing benefit, etc.)
Individual agreements are still possible	Although the UK would lose the benefit of being part of the free-trade zone in Europe, it would be possible for the UK to negotiate agreements with individual countries in the EU, as Switzerland has done successfully. Individual agreements would also be easier with other countries (e.g. China, Russia, etc.) and could be negotiated separately from EU neighbours.