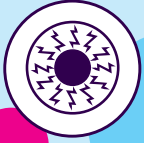


Science Debate Kit: Drugs in Sport



Debate Kit: Drugs in sport *Should ALL drugs be banned in sport?*

A structured practice debate on a controversial topic. The different 'rounds' of the debate help students think through the issues and reconsider their opinions. The structure also shows them how to build a discussion and back up their opinions with facts.

You can use all eight characters, or fewer, as you wish.

The minimum is the four essential characters (**in bold**), this gives two for and two against.

Characters

For banning

- **Helen Ayres – Sports historian**
- **Edgar Fortescue – Retired sportsman**
- Reg Curtis – Dad
- Alina Dent – Sister

Against banning

- **Chrissie Batchelor – Archer with asthma**
- **George Clarkson – Sports journalist**
- Hiba Halifi – Ethiopian sports coach
- Ross Gentley – Sports counsellor

Facilitation tips

Ensure students know there is no right or wrong answer. Be observant of ones who want to speak and are not getting a chance. Encourage students to give a reason for their opinions.

Can be used with ages 11-18

For groups who may need extra support you can put the following prompt sentences upon the board:-

"I think ALL drugs should/shouldn't be banned because....."

"I think is the most important point to think about."

Learning notes

Learning objective:

- To practise discussing and debating issues and expressing an opinion
- Understand more of the science and ethics around performance enhancement in sport.

Other learning outcomes:

- Consider social, ethical and factual issues in an integrated way
- Think about different points of view
- Learn to back up their opinions with facts

Curriculum points covered:

- Science as a Human Endeavour:
- Scientific knowledge is used to inform personal and community decisions
 - Science and technology contribute to finding solutions to a range of contemporary issues; these solutions may impact on other areas of society and involve ethical considerations
 - The values and needs of contemporary society can influence the focus of scientific research

Debate

Reg Curtis – Dad



I had dreams of being a runner, but a knee injury as a teenager took that away from me. My son takes after his Dad and he's a great runner. I've coached him for years, taking him around the country to competitions. Last year he made the national finals for the under 15s 100 metres. I was really proud, but he lost to a boy who was taking asthma drugs. I don't think that boy had asthma, I think his Dad had bribed the doctor, so he could cheat!

Fact: In the 1984 Olympics whole teams of Modern Pentathletes were prescribed beta-blockers.

Issue: If people with certain illnesses are allowed to take drugs that may help them win, then some people will pretend to have those illnesses. Doctors can be fooled!

Question: It may be unfair to people who really need the medication, but every set of rules will be unfair to someone. Why leave such an obvious loophole?

**I'm a Scientist
Get me OUT of here**

Debate

Chrissie Batchelor – Archer with asthma



I got hooked on archery after trying it on holiday as a kid. I love it, and now I compete for the county. But I'm severely asthmatic and likely to have an asthma attack when I'm nervous – like when I'm in a big competition. If I couldn't use my inhaler I couldn't compete any more.

Fact: Sportspeople with asthma are allowed to take asthma medication, but it's banned otherwise. These drugs open the airways, which could help in sports like running, but probably wouldn't make a difference in archery.

Issue: It's bad enough having severe asthma, don't take my dream away too!

Question: I just want the same chance to compete as anyone else. Why should I be denied that because of the cheats?

**I'm a Scientist
Get me OUT of here**

Debate

Hiba Halifi – Ethiopian Sports Coach



I coach Ethiopia's top young athletes and some of them have real world-beating potential. But the decks are stacked against them - money brings better equipment, trainers, and even chemists. Everyone knows that some sportspeople are probably taking designer drugs that can't be detected or aren't widely known about yet. You can get round the bans if you really want to.

Fact: Some American athletes spend \$150,000 a year on their training. Here in Ethiopia a basketball costs over one month's wages for most people.

Issue: At the moment it's not who's the best at their sport, it's who's got the best chemist.

Question: Isn't sport supposed to be sporting? At the moment it's easier for rich countries to win at the Olympics.

**I'm a Scientist
Get me OUT of here**

Debate

Helen Ayres – Sports historian



I'm writing a book on a 19th Century boxer called Bendigo. He was just a poor boy from the slums, but he had grit and skill and he won fights. Today I think sport is a joke. Some athletes have a team of expert nutritionists, physiotherapists and psychologists. I think we should ban everything and make sport real again.

Fact: Blood-doping and training at altitude both make your body make more red blood cells, but one of them is illegal and one isn't.

Issue: Why do we fuss so much about drugs, but not all the other things athletes do to themselves? Why should some things be banned and others not?

Question: Should sport be about individual athletes, or about who's got the best support team?

**I'm a Scientist
Get me OUT of here**

Debate

Ross Gentley – Sports Counsellor



I work with youth league players at our A-league club, giving pastoral care. The students are talented teenagers who hope to become professional footballers. I help them adjust to the pressure of being away from home, training full time. I listen to them and try to help with their problems. They are lovely kids - brave and determined - but I worry they miss out on a normal childhood.

Fact: Caffeine, alcohol and aspirin are all drugs and could be banned under this proposal.

Issue: Training is hard on them physically. And on top of that is all the mental stress – from their coaches, from the team, from their parents.

Question: Is it fair to place more restrictions on young sportspeople that other kids their age don't have?

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Scientist
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Debate

Alina Dent – Sister



Oscar was my big brother, he always looked out for me. He got into weightlifting when we were teenagers. I remember him coming home with his first trophy, he was so proud. He died suddenly of a heart attack three years ago. He was 24. We found out afterwards he'd been taking steroids.

Fact: Steroids can cause heart damage and high blood pressure, mood swings and aggression, acne and liver damage. They can also cause impotence in men.

Issue: There's so much pressure on athletes. Oscar really wanted to win and make us all proud. I also think his coach pushed him into it.

Question: Is it fair to expect athletes to resist the pressure to take drugs on their own, or should we make regulation as strict as possible to back them up?

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Debate

George Clarkson – Sports Journalist



I've always loved sport and I love working as a sports journalist. You can't beat the excitement of a close match or an amazing performance in athletics. Sport is entertainment. It's nonsense to get all holy about it. I actually think all drug-taking in sport should be legalised. Let's really see where we can get to!

Fact: 12 out of 23 world records for women's athletics are over 20 years old and current athletes can't reach them. Some think those records were set on drugs, before modern testing. They may never be beaten.

Issue: If sport plateaus and we stop getting new world records, audiences will get bored, it'll stop making money, and I'd be out of a job!

Question: Isn't the point of science to move humans forwards and go beyond what is natural?

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Scientist
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Debate

Edgar Fortescue – Retired Sportsman



I boxed for Australia, and played cricket for Victoria, in the 1950s, and I loved every minute of it. I always tell young people, get into sport! It's healthy exercise, it's character building and it's great fun. But sport is supposed to be sporting. These days, with all these performance-enhancing drugs, it's just not right.

Fact: There are literally hundreds of known drugs that are allowed in sport (because scientists don't THINK they make you more likely to win). And of course, drugs that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) don't know about yet haven't been banned yet.

Issue: I think having some things allowed and some things not is too complicated. There's too many grey areas. We should just ban everything and make it clear.

Question: What's sport supposed to be about if it's not winning fair and square?

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Scientist
Get me OUT of here