



DEFENDING YOUR BELIEFS

- ✓ Students engage with questioning and defending their beliefs and learn to develop appropriate strategies to do so.
- ✓ Teacher should be prepared to deal sensitively with strong emotions (such as hostility or defensiveness) that will likely be evoked by the activity.
- ✓ The goal is to practice asking questions, stating opinions, defending positions in polite ways.
- ✓ Teacher explains that the students will focus on the language of argument through this activity.
- ✓ Teacher writes a bald statement and a hostile question on the board.

Those can be:

Controversial statement

The Earth is flat.

Strong challenge

Are you serious?

- ✓ The class brainstorms ways to make the above 'softer' by the use of hedges or 'harder' by the use of intensifiers.

Examples of hedges:

From my point of view, the Earth looks flat.

The Earth looks flat to me.

I'm not sure that I understand what you're saying.

If I understand you correctly, you're suggesting that the Earth is flat?

Examples of intensifiers:

The Earth is obviously flat!

There's no doubt at all that the Earth is flat!

Are you really suggesting that the Earth is flat?

You cannot, surely, be saying that the Earth is flat!

- ✓ Teacher explains that some people hold beliefs that many others might think are strange.
- ✓ Teacher invites students to discuss more controversial statements and asks them to discuss both (or multiple) beliefs about them in small groups.
- ✓ Role play. Two students come up to act out a chosen discussion with one of the following attitudes:
Very hostile > Quite hostile > Neutral > Quite friendly > Very friendly
- ✓ As a closing exercise, the class discusses which approach worked best? Did they feel a hostile or friendly approach was more successful? Why?