

Warm up

Ask students to brainstorm ways that an informal discussion between friends differs from an academic discussion in a seminar or tutorial. Check that students understand what is meant by an academic source, i.e. an academic book or a paper published in an academic journal.

Using the Factsheet

There are three possible ways to use the Factsheet:

- 1 Give students the Factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the Worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the Factsheet and answer any questions.
- 2 Give students the Factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with students.
- 3 Focus on the Worksheet in the lesson, then give students the Factsheet at the end of the lesson, so they can take it home and keep it as a reference or revision tool.

Theory to practice

Make sure students understand that they can use the tutor's comments as a guide for identifying what might be problematic about each statement. Of course, they might find other problems, or disagree with the tutor's line of questioning. Try to make clear that this isn't a simple case of right or wrong. All of the statements are potentially effective, but taken in isolation, they all have limitations as well. Encourage students to refer back to the Key features section of the Factsheet if they need some ideas about how to evaluate the opinions.

Possible answers

Student 1 has given a clear statement, but has not given any reasons, evidence or examples.

Student 2 has quoted an argument which sounds very interesting, but has not given reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with it.

Student 3 has quoted some statistics, but without a citation it is not clear what they apply to. So the statement needs clarification.

Student 4 has probably given their opinion most effectively, backing it up with a citation and drawing an interesting conclusion.

As the tutor's comments suggest, the opinion may be weakened by a sense of overconfidence.

Using the Worksheet

Practice

1 Below are the opinions of three students on the topic of electric cars. Read the opinions and match them to the type of evidence used to support each one.

- Give students time to read the three student opinions individually.
- Ask them to discuss their answers to the matching task in pairs before going through the answers as a whole class.
- Check that students understand the difference between objective evidence, expert opinion or argument, and the world knowledge and reasoning of the individual student.

Answers

- a** 3
b 1
c 2

2 Look at the opinions again and answer the questions.

- Ask students to work through the questions individually or in pairs.
- Go through the answers as a whole class and answer any questions.

a Suggested answers

- 1 I think technological advances will probably ...
- 2 I'm still not convinced that ...; I can't see how ...
- 3 It seems clear to me that ...; Surely ...*

*The adverb *surely* here signals the speaker's opinion.

b Students' own answers

TIP

- Give students time to read the tip box. Students sometimes believe that using tentative language will count against them and make them appear less confident or less knowledgeable. Explain that it can actually make their argument stronger because it shows they have anticipated and pre-empted possible challenges to their ideas.
- Go through the examples of tentative language in Exercise 1.

Suggested answers

- 1 will probably overcome a lot of these (not necessarily all of them); could solve the problem; That would make it possible ... (not *will*)
- 2 There seem to be ...
- 3 It seems clear ...; Surely ...

3 You are going to discuss how rising sea levels might affect the world's major coastal cities.

Read the infographic and consider the following questions:

- Explain that students are going to read an infographic in preparation for a discussion. Tell them to use the questions to help them prepare and make notes.
- Encourage them to ask you questions about the information. Answer any language questions and also any queries about the sources and reliability of the information. The information below could be useful for the students, but only respond to questions at this stage if asked.

Text A: It is significant that this text was written in 1997, at the time of the Kyoto Protocol (an international agreement to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change). Most evidence suggests that results since have been mixed – some signatory countries have reduced their emissions and some have not met their targets. At the same time, emissions from the rest of the world who did not sign the protocol, especially China, have increased significantly.

Text B: This is a more recent text. The cities mentioned are indeed at risk of flooding if current predictions, based on available data, are correct. The comment about moving cities is expert opinion rather than objective evidence.

Names: It is normal to use just the surnames of academic authors. It's useful, though, to know the gender of the authors to avoid having to say *he/she said*. Here, Anderson is male and Knowles is female.

3.2 mm – actual data based on satellite observations by NASA

52–98 cm – information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (a UN body). A prediction based on current data about sea level rises and global temperature increases.

275 million – Climate Central is a non-profit organization made up of scientists and journalists that makes information about climate change available to the public. The number is based on the current population sizes of cities that would be affected by flooding if the IPCC predictions are correct.

Note: The statistics here are based on real data. The texts are invented for this task, although based on authentic ideas. Students should believe that it is all authentic information for the purposes of the task, but feel free to explain this at the end of the lesson.

4  In groups, discuss the questions below. Take turns to put forward your opinions, supporting them with appropriate evidence. Respond to each other's opinions.

- Put students in groups of five or six. Remind them that they should discuss the questions given using the infographic as support where appropriate. They should not just discuss the infographic itself.
- Remind them that a discussion should not just be a series of statements of opinion. They should respond to each other and link their ideas together.
- Walk around the class to monitor and make notes on good and bad practice based on the points in Exercise 5.

5  **In your group, prepare a short summary of your discussion. Consider the following questions:**

- Give groups time to discuss the questions and make notes.
- In a small class, ask each group to summarize their discussion to the whole class. In larger classes, ask each group to feed back on just one of the questions each.
- Follow up with a whole-class discussion about some of the key issues you noticed whilst monitoring. At this point, it may be appropriate to mention any information about the source and relevance of the information in the infographic, especially if students misinterpreted it or didn't pick up on key points. Emphasize the importance of thinking critically about what you read.

Reflect

6 **Reflect on the discussion task using the following questions.**

- Give students time to reflect individually on their own performance.

7 **Complete an 'exit card'.**

- Ask students to fill out an 'exit card' at the end of the lesson. They write down one thing they achieved successfully in the discussion and one thing they think they could improve next time, along with their name. You could give out small index cards for students to write on or they could use a slip of paper. They hand the 'cards' to you or put them in a box as they leave the classroom.
- Use the cards to assess which skills might need more practice in future lessons.