

Argumentag Wrestling Tournament

Mark out four "rings" (squares about 4 foot across) which is where the arguing will take place. I use masking tape. You can mark it out with chalk, or put post-it notes.

You need eight teams to use the PPT attached. I usually get them to choose their own teams, as the quieter children tend to stick together and therefore still get a say. Take the Aces and Kings from a pack of cards and give one card to each team. This is their team name for deciding who plays who when and recording scores.

Next, get two teams to face off across one of the rings to demonstrate how the game works. This is how I do it.

"Argumentag Wrestling is like Tag Wrestling on the telly, except that instead of throwing each other to the ground and bellyflopping each other, you're wrestling with your brains instead."

"Each Argumentag Wrestling Match starts with a question. They have to be questions where there are exactly two sides to the argument, so a really open question like, "What is art?" won't work. You'll need a mix of serious and silly ones, like "Are sounds real, or in your head?" and "Which is better, the North Pole or the South".

"Let's say it's the Ace of Spades turn to choose the question, and you've chosen, "Which is better, the North Pole or the South. Because it's their question, the other group get to choose which way they're going to argue" (establish which way the teams would argue on that question).

"When I ring the bell, one player from each team steps into the ring. Just go 'blah, blah, rhubarb, rhubarb', as if you're arguing. When you run out of arguments, hold out your hand for another player on your team to tag you and take your place. Or if you've got a point you want to make, hold out your hand for the active player to tag you and then step in." (get them to demonstrate the tagging process).

"There are two things that make the game work really well. One is people swapping in and out quickly without one person dominating. The other is that only the players in the ring speak. If you've got a point to make, don't prompt your wrestler with it. Hold out your hand to be tagged and then make it yourself."

Get them to create their questions (this gives you time to mark out the other rings if you haven't already). Mention that they should choose questions where the argument is evenly balanced, or the opponents will choose the easy side and wipe the floor with them.

When each team has three or four questions ready, you can begin. The Tournament PPT shows who plays who in each round. When the teams are in their starting positions, ask the teams whose cards are underlined to say their questions. Then get their opponents to choose which way they will argue. Repeating this in between rounds keeps the energy at a manageable level.

Get them waiting for you to ring the bell, and just before they start remind them of the importance of frequent tagging, only the wrestlers in the ring speaking, and that they mustn't intimidate the opponent physically or by shouting them down. Then ring the bell (which I do by voice) and off they go.

TIPS

Scoring the bouts is tricky – don't get too hung up on it. If someone lands a knockout blow, celebrate it (two teams were arguing over which of a pair of classmates were better – not the most appropriate question but it did lead to the brilliant argument, "James's fake facebook girlfriend is more convincing.") The judging is an opportunity to drop the energy level in the room again by just having your voice, so it doesn't get out of hand.

Record the scores on the scoring PPT or printout of it.

Questions in recent tournaments:

Winter or summer?

Communism or capitalism?

Squares or circles?

Maths or English?

Assisted suicide or not?

Death penalty or not?

School uniform or not?

Hippo or crocodile?

Are sounds real?

Can anything be art?

Caving or climbing?

Rock or reggae?

God or not?

Sex before marriage?

You can add an extra twist by getting people to change ends in the middle of a round, swapping sides physically and argumentatively to disagree with what they've just said.

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