

# Socratic Seminar as Dialogue vs. Debate

The best Socratic Seminars are those in which something new and unexpected is discovered. This happens when the seminar is approached as a joint search or exploration through dialogue rather than a defense of ideas.



## Dialogue and Debate



Dialogue is collaborative with multiple sides working toward shared understanding.	Debate is oppositional; two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.
In dialogue, one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground.	In debate, one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.
Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.	Debate affirms a participant's point of view.
Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude and an openness to being wrong and to change.	Debate creates a close minded attitude and a determination to be right and defends assumptions as truth.
In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, expecting that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than threaten it.	In debate one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.
Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.	Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.
In dialogue, one searches for strengths in all positions.	In debate, one searches for weaknesses in the other position.
Dialogue respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.	Debate rebuts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.
Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to workable solutions.	Debate assumes a single right answer that someone already has.
Dialogue remains open-ended.	Debate demands a conclusion and a winner.