

DEBATE VS. DELIBERATION

In debate, you search for glaring differences.	In deliberation, you search for strength in another position.
In debate, you search for weaknesses in another position.	Deliberation involves concern for others.
Debate involves countering the other's position at the expense of the relationship.	Deliberation assumes that many people have pieces of an answer to a workable solution.
Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in your beliefs.	In deliberation, you temporarily suspend your beliefs.
Debate is oppositional and seeks to prove the other wrong.	Deliberation is collaborative and seeks common understanding.
The goal of debate is winning – often only for a short-term advantage.	The goal of deliberation is common ground for action, which is the basis for consistent policy.
In debate, you listen to find flaws and counter-arguments.	In deliberation, you listen to understand and find meaning in agreement.
Debate defends assumptions as truth.	Deliberation reveals assumptions for reevaluation.
Debate defends original solutions.	Deliberation opens the possibility of better solutions.
In debate, you submit your best thinking and defend its rightness.	In deliberation, you submit your best thinking in order to improve it.

Characteristics of Debate Dialogue and Deliberation

Debate	Dialogue	Deliberation
Contest	Explore	Choose
Compete	Exchange	Weigh
Argue	Discuss	Decide
Promote opinion	Build relationships	Make decisions
Seek majority	Understand	Seek overlap
Persuade	Seek understanding	Seek common ground
Dig in	Reach across	Framed to make choices
Tightly structured	Loosely structured	
Express	Listen	Listen
Usually fast	Usually slow	Usually slow
Clarifies	Clarifies	Clarifies
Majoritarian	Nondecisive	Complementary

Differences between deliberation and dialogue or polite conversations may be difficult to see. The crucial difference is that dialogue is conversation to increase understanding. Deliberation may include dialogue, but it goes further. Deliberation is conversation to make a **choice** about how to **act** together. Dialogue is also a useful form of conversation. Again the critical point is to understand which problem situations are best addressed by debate, which are best addressed by dialogue and which demand a deliberative conversation.