



Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas

What is Deliberation?



www.deliberating.org

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What is deliberation?

Deliberation is the focused exchange of ideas and the analysis of multiple views with the aim of making a personal decision and finding areas of agreement within a group.



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Deliberation is more than discussion

Discussion is important in a democracy. People can gain insights and share ideas through discussion, but they do not need to make a decision.

Deliberation focuses on making a personal decision and finding areas of agreement with others.

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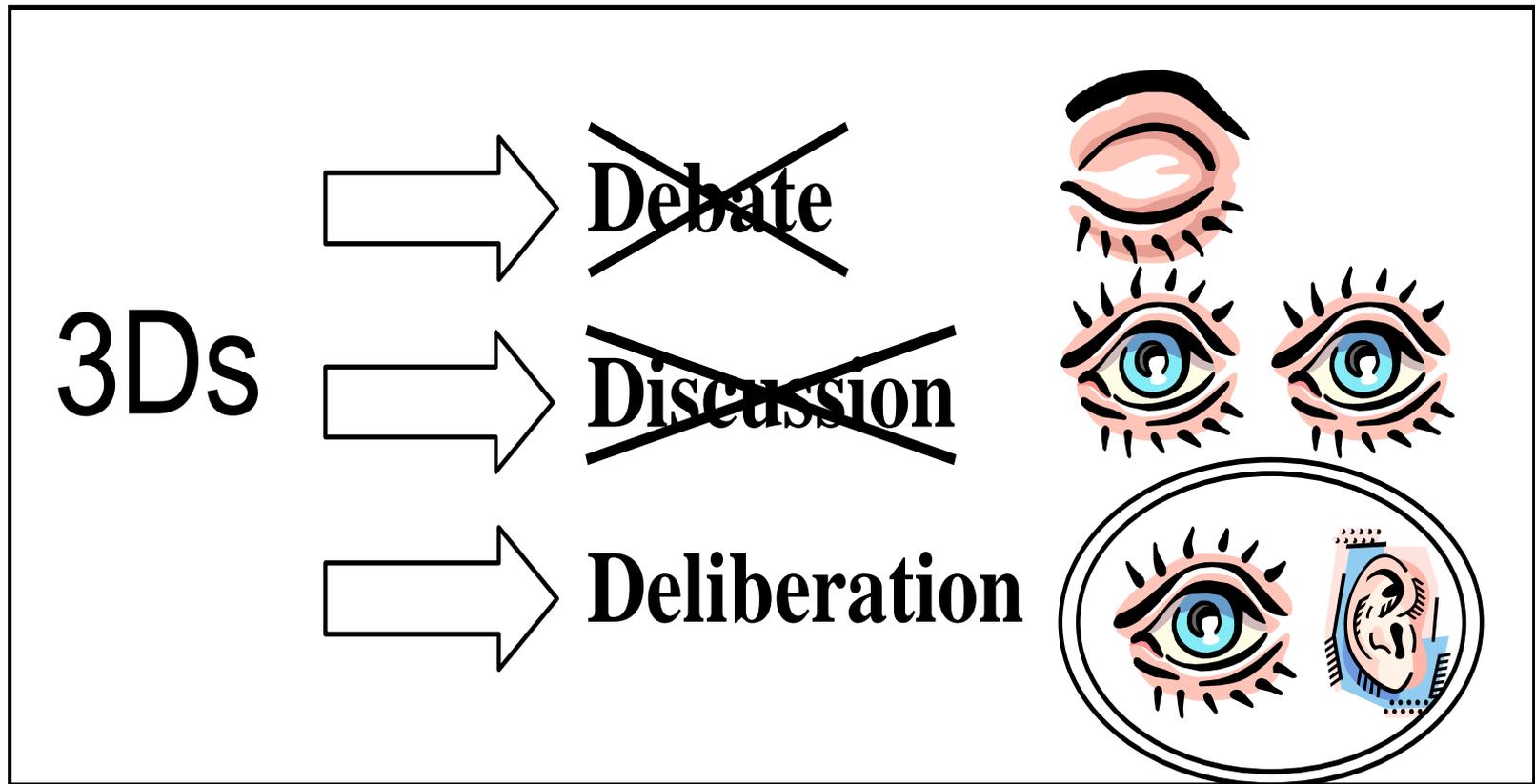
Deliberation is different from debate

Debate is important in a democracy. When people debate, there is a winner and a loser. Each side listens only in order to refute the other side.

Deliberation emphasizes the exchange of ideas. Each side listens in order to understand the perspective of the other side and to identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

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This is one way to imagine deliberation



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Why is deliberation important to democracy?

- Freedom of speech is the foundation of a democracy.
- Citizens must be able and willing to exchange ideas among themselves and with their representatives in government.
- Citizens also must be able to and willing to hear, understand, and analyze viewpoints very different from their own.
- Deliberating those views can help citizens and government officials make better decisions.

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DDA Issues and Deliberation Questions

Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas focuses on current controversial public issues in partner countries in the Western Hemisphere.

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Controversial Public Issues

- The issue has more than one answer that could be well-supported
- The issue is unresolved
- The issue is “open,” not “closed”

Example 1: The right of women to vote in elections is a **closed** question in most democracies.

Example 2: The right of same-sex couples to marry is an **open** question in most democracies.

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Controversial **Public** Issues

- The issue is public (involves the civic community)
- The issue requires action by a public body

Example 1: Should I cheer for my country's football team in the World Cup? [**personal** issue]

Example 2: Should our democracy pay to build a stadium for our World Cup team? [**public** issue]

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DDA Deliberation Questions

- Reflect a clear conflict between competing democratic values
- Increase knowledge about important democratic principles
- Are age-appropriate and relevant for high school students
- Facilitate a healthy exchange among students

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DDA Model of Deliberation

- Not every method of deliberation works for every kind of issue
- DDA uses the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) method of deliberation
- Structured Academic Controversy was developed by the Johnson brothers at the University of Minnesota

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Structured Academic Controversy (SAC)

- Careful reading of a common text
- Introduction of a public policy question
- Pairs find compelling reasons to support/oppose the deliberation question and teach each other their arguments
- Pairs reverse positions and repeat the process
- Pairs now deliberate the question together using what they have learned
- Large group debrief follows small group work

Adapted from Johnson & Johnson, University of Minnesota