

# Dialogue vs Debate

Dialogue is a distinctive kind of communication that allows people to connect and build shared meaning. Compared with discussion – where people present ideas with the aim of putting forward the strongest or most persuasive view – dialogue fosters a collaborative exchange of ideas aimed at mutual respect and understanding.

Rather than a competitive collision of opposites that fosters more disagreement, frustration and confusion, dialogue is a shared process; a collaborative exploration that seeks to understand another's opinion by first showing deep understanding of their position.

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
Adversarial: attempts to prove the other side wrong	Collaborative: people work together to find a shared view and common understanding
About winning: assuming that there is a right answer and one has it	About exploring: assuming that are pieces to an answer shared by many
A closed-minded attitude; dogmatic determination to be right	An open-minded attitude; openness to change and being wrong
Listening for flaws; making counter-arguments	Listening to understand; making links and revealing shared views
Defending assumptions as fixed positions or 'truth'	Surfacing assumptions for discussion and evaluation
Criticising the other sides position or beliefs	Re-examining all positions, understanding values
Defending one's own views against those of others	Accepting that others' views might improve one's own
Treats communication as a transaction	Treats communication as a relationship
Affirm's one's own point of view	Enlarges and possibly changes the views of both sides

Threat is reduced so that meaning can be heard and understanding is allowed to flourish. Dialogue is a proactive process that may be difficult to understand, and even more difficult to create authentically and maintain between people. It is a structured approach that often needs guidance to initiate and practice to become a habit.

Dialogue has the ability to convert detractors into supporters, conflict into consensus, and add depth to business relationships.