

A Comparison of Dialogue and Debate

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides working together toward common understanding.	<i>Debate is oppositional: two sides opposing each other and attempting to prove each other wrong.</i>
In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.	<i>In debate, winning is the goal.</i>
In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.	<i>In debate one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.</i>
Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.	<i>Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.</i>
Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.	<i>Debate defends assumptions as truth.</i>
Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.	<i>Debate causes critique of the other position.</i>
Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.	<i>Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.</i>
Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude; an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.	<i>Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.</i>
In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.	<i>In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right</i>
Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.	<i>Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.</i>
In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.	<i>In debate, one searches for glaring differences.</i>
In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.	<i>In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other positions.</i>
Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.	<i>Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.</i>
Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.	<i>Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.</i>
Dialogue remains open-ended.	<i>Debate implies a conclusion.</i>