

# Climate Change Debate Topics

## Introduction

Climate change is the biggest threat facing humans and the globe. This activity toolkit allows groups to discuss and debate various topics about climate change. A good debate topic enables participants to learn both sides of an issue and creates a thoughtful dialogue. In selecting topics, make sure there are ample resources available on both sides of the debate.

## Procedure

1. Pick a debate topic on climate change. Use one of the statements we outlined below or choose one not listed. See <https://www.kportclimate.org/action/> for more ideas on subjects.
2. Divide into two groups. Each group represents one side of the topic. If there are too many people, some can be the listening audience or select audience members to be judges. The debate teams should have equal numbers of people.
3. Create rules for the debates that include timelines, interruptions, etc. Here is a resource: <https://www.theclassroom.com/debate-rules-techniques-8736679.html>
4. Debaters should choose a side of the topic to defend and do background research to support their argument. We have provided resources here, or debaters may do further research.
5. After organizing their notes, debaters should create and prepare logical arguments with supporting evidence and examples to use in the debate. Each group should plan the order of presenters.
6. Organize the room to have both groups sitting separately and facing the audience.
7. The group supporting the topic presents their argument first, and then the opposing group presents their argument. Once each side has had a turn to speak, each team can present its rebuttals in the same manner. Be sure to have a person in charge of timekeeping and rules.
8. Each team presents its closing statement.
9. At the end of the debate, allow time for a debrief and discussion. Audience members can give their opinions and questions to group members, and group members can also give feedback on how they felt about the debate.
10. We would love to hear about your experience, let us know how it goes at [programs@kportclimate.org](mailto:programs@kportclimate.org)!

## Debate Topics

Click on each subject below for some debate topics and resources based on the subject. Keep checking these documents for periodic updates and additions!

- [Equity \(pg. 2\)](#)
- [Footprint \(pg. 3\)](#)
- [Species \(pg. 4\)](#)
- [Weather \(pg. 5\)](#)
- [Energy \(pg. 6\)](#)
- [Ocean \(pg. 7\)](#)

# Climate Change Debate Topics: Equity

Climate change does not affect everyone equally. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes, "Impacts of climate change are likely to be felt most acutely not only by the poor, but also by certain segments of the population, such as the elderly, the very young, the powerless, indigenous peoples, and recent immigrants, particularly if they are linguistically isolated." Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! Here are some debate topics:

## Questions:

1. Climate strikes should be supported by school administrators. Countries that contribute more to climate change, such as the United States and China, should have more responsibility in funding mitigations.

◦ Resources:

- [China's fight against climate change.](#)
- [The US and China's Joint Statement on addressing the climate crisis](#)
- [Climate Action Tracker on China](#)
- [Report on ways to overcome obstacles to cooperation between the United States and China on climate change](#)
- More resources are coming soon!

2. The government should have the authority to force communities to move based on climate impacts.

◦ Resources:

- [A New American Migration due to climate change](#)
- ["Climigration"](#)
- [The challenges of community relocation due to climate change](#)
- [Americans moving to escape climate change](#)
- More resources are coming soon!

3. Climate Change is the cause of civil unrest in the Middle East and has caused the growth of extremism.

◦ Resources:

- [Drought leading instability and water weaponization in the Middle East and North Africa](#)
- [Climate change could exacerbate conflict in the Middle East](#)
- [Climate change and conflict in the Middle East](#)
- More resources are coming soon!

<sup>1</sup> Wilbanks, T.J., P. Romero Lankao, M. Bao, F. Berkhout, S. Cairncross, J.-P. Ceron, M. Kapshe, R. Muir-Wood and R. Zapata-Marti, 2007: Industry, settlement and society. Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 357-390.  
<<https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar4-wg2-chapter7-1.pdf>>



# Climate Change Debate Topics: Footprint

The products we use, our actions, and the way we live our lives is known as carbon footprint. Unfortunately, our carbon footprint contributes to climate change. Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! Below are some debate topics and resources:

## Questions:

1. There should be a carbon tax to offset businesses' footprint and encourage more efficient energy usage.

- Resources:
  - [Explanation of "carbon offset"](#)
  - [Explanation of carbon tax and how it works](#)
  - [Pros and cons on carbon tax](#)
  - [How carbon tax can help climate crisis](#)
  - [How carbon tax helps energy-efficient use](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

2. Humans cause climate change.

- Resources:
  - [Evidence and consensus of climate change](#)
  - [NASA measures direct evidence humans are causing climate change](#)
  - [How much of climate change is natural and man-made?](#)
  - [Common denier arguments on climate change](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

3. Paying farmers to store carbon is greenwashing and not an effective way to fight climate change.

- Resources:
  - [Politicians considering paying farmers to store carbon](#)
  - [Cargill's experiment to pay farmers for carbon sequestration](#)
  - [MIT Technology review against carbon farming](#)
  - [Setting aside land for climate progress](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

4. Youth have the right to sue the government because of the lack of action on climate change.

- Resources:
  - [Kids suing governments about climate](#)
  - [The federal appeals court threw out the youth climate lawsuit](#)
  - [The future of climate litigation](#)
  - [Juliana v United States](#)
  - More resources coming soon!

5. Should plastics be banned?

- Resources:
  - [Powerful reasons why plastic bags should be banned immediately](#)
  - [Single-use plastics 101](#)
  - [Should plastic bags be banned everywhere?](#)
  - [Plastic bans will not solve the ocean plastic problem](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

6. Corporations should be solely responsible for the collection and recycling of the plastics they produce.

- Resources:
  - [The plan to make producers pay to fix recycling](#)
  - [The federal bill seeks to hold the plastics industry responsible for dealing with waste](#)
  - [These four companies produce 6 million tons of plastic every year](#)
  - [What are businesses doing to turn off the plastic tap?](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!



# Climate Change Debate Topics: Species

Climate change has affected many species with changes in their habitat, food chain, and health, leading many species to be on the verge of extinction. Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! Below are some debate topics and resources on species:

## Questions:

1. Rising temperatures are not a net positive for species.
  - Resources:
    - [Changes in temperature alter the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem functioning](#)
    - [The evolution of corporate no net loss and net positive impact biodiversity commitments](#)
    - [Climate change effects on biodiversity, ecosystems, ecosystem services, and natural resource management](#)
    - More resources are coming soon!
2. Is Aquaculture good or bad?
  - Resources:
    - [Do the benefits of aquaculture outweigh its negative impacts?](#)
    - [Blog from UMass student on if aquaculture is good or bad for the environment](#)
    - [Blog from Colorado State University on aquaculture](#)
    - [Article on farmed fish and the environment](#)
    - More resources are coming soon!
3. Should there be global mandates for fishing limits?
  - Resources:
    - [Information on The Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act \(MSA\)](#)
    - [How to improve international fisheries](#)
    - [Draft resolution on sustainable fisheries by the United Nations General Assembly](#)
    - More resources are coming soon!
4. Most species have been saved from extinction due to climate change.
  - Resources:
    - [Up to 48 species saved from extinction by conservation efforts](#)
    - [Extinction is not inevitable](#)
    - [One-third of all plant and animal species could be extinct in 50 years](#)
    - [Recent responses to climate change reveal the drivers of species extinction and survival](#)
    - More resources are coming soon!



# Climate Change Debate Topics: Weather

Many studies have shown how global warming has led to higher frequency and intensity weather. Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! Below are some debate topics and resources on weather and climate change.

## Questions:

1. Arctic warming will affect weather patterns.

- Resources:
  - [Explanation from NOAA how arctic affects extreme weather](#)
  - [Study showing Arctic warming is altering weather patterns](#)
  - [Climate change in the Arctic](#)
  - [Understanding the Arctic polar vortex](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

2. How do we know if climate change is affecting weather?

- Resources:
  - [Map of extreme weather around the world due to climate change](#)
  - [Explanation of weather and climate change](#)
  - [Overview: weather, global warming, and climate change](#)
  - [How can climate change affect natural disasters?](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

3. We should fight wildfires with controlled burns (also referred to as prescribed burns).

- Resources:
  - [Controlled burning](#)
  - [Why prescribed burns don't stop wildfires](#)
  - [Prescribed burning - an overview](#)
  - [Prescribed burns may help reduce the U.S. carbon footprint](#)
  - [Impact of smoke from prescribed burning](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

4. There should be more water restrictions for areas experiencing droughts.

- Resources:
  - [Drought](#)
  - [Cox issues new water restrictions during historic drought](#)
  - [Climate impacts on water utilities](#)
  - [California water restrictions have not stopped the sprinklers from flowing](#)
  - [City water restrictions hurt our most vulnerable](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!



# Climate Change Debate Topics: Energy

Answers for reducing climate change can be found in energy regulations and usage. Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! See below for debate topics and resources on energy:

## Questions:

1. The government should institute mandatory sustainable building codes and energy efficiency regulations.

- Resources:
  - [Smart Growth Green Building Standards](#)
  - [Energy efficiency policies and programs](#)
  - [Governments should implement energy-efficiency standards and labels](#)
  - [Fact Sheet on energy efficiency standards for appliances, lighting, and equipment](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

2. Nuclear Power is a renewable energy that the US should invest in.

- Resources:
  - [Why nuclear power must be part of the energy solution](#)
  - [3 Reasons Why Nuclear is Clean and Sustainable](#)
  - [Information on non-renewable energy.](#)
  - [Is Nuclear Energy Renewable?](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

3. The US Government should shift subsidies to Renewable Energy from Fossil Fuels.

- Resources:
  - [Renewable energy explained](#)
  - [Ending subsidies for renewable energy.](#)
  - [How Much Does the US Subsidize Renewable Energy Versus Fossil Fuels?](#)
  - [Energy subsidies: Evolution in the global energy transformation to 2050](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

4. Offshore wind is a viable environmentally friendly way to generate energy for the US.

- Resources:
  - [Offshore Wind Research and Development](#)
  - [Advantages and Challenges of Wind Energy.](#)
  - [The Risks and Opportunities of Offshore Wind Energy.](#)
  - [Biden Administration Jumpstarts Offshore Wind Energy Projects to Create Jobs](#)
  - [Five big problems for offshore wind](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!



# Climate Change Debate Topics: Oceans

Some say the ocean has been one of the most affected areas of climate change, especially relating to changes in ocean properties and sea level rise. Keep checking this document for periodic updates and additions! Below are some debate topics and resources relating to the ocean:

## Questions:

1. Will rising temperatures affect global ocean currents?

- Resources:
  - [Scientists say ocean circulation is slowing](#)
  - [Climate change is weakening the ocean's currents](#)
  - [National Geographic Ocean Currents and Climate](#)
  - [Global warming is speeding up Earth's massive ocean currents](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

2. Climate change is causing sea level rise.

- Resources:
  - [Climate Change: Global Sea Level](#)
  - [How is sea level rise related to climate change?](#)
  - [Facts and information on sea level rise](#)
  - [Sea level risks posed by Antarctica](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

3. Growing photosynthetic algae caused by an increase in CO2 is good for seawater.

- Resources:
  - [The response of photosynthesis to ocean acidification](#)
  - [Climate change and harmful algal blooms](#)
  - [Toxic algal blooms are worsening with climate change](#)
  - [Insights and perspectives on climate change and harmful algal blooms](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

4. Coral reefs are dying because of climate change.

- Resources:
  - [Human threats to corals](#)
  - [Losing our coral reefs](#)
  - [Scientists are trying to save coral reefs](#)
  - [Effects of ocean acidification on coral reefs](#)
  - [These corals could survive climate change](#)
  - More resources are coming soon!

