

# 3

## ETHICS

# Expressing stance

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ identify features of a successful academic stance,
- ▶ write a stance which has an academic tone, is reasonable and well-justified,
- ▶ integrate counter-arguments and rebuttals into a stance to make it more critical,
- ▶ express agreement and disagreement with the stance of others in speaking, and
- ▶ use questions to make a tutorial discussion more critical and thoughtful.



## ACADEMIC WRITING



### Task 1

#### Express a personal opinion about an ethical issue

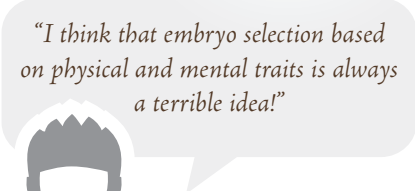
Imagine that you could go forward in time to before your future children (one male and one female) were born. At this time in the future, parents are able to select from a range of their own embryos for transplantation based on a “menu” of traits and abilities. However, they are able to choose only four traits for each child.

Look at the menu of traits below and answer the following questions:

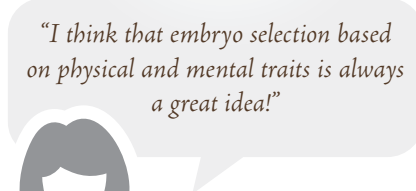
1. Which four traits would you choose for your female child?
2. Which four traits would you choose for your male child?
3. Do you think it is ethically acceptable to use technology for embryo selection in this way? Why? Or why not?

“Mental” traits	Physical characteristics	“Athletic” traits	Personality traits
mathematical ability	hair colour	strong upper body	studiousness
musical ability	eye colour	strong lower body	dependability
ability to be empathetic	height	good balance	self-confidence
spirituality	weight	flexibility	sociability [e.g. ability to make friends]
ability to be loving	body type	good coordination	sensitivity
good memory	ability to age well	good endurance	independence


Mike and Jane are undergraduate students. They have two very different stances on the use of technology for embryo selection based on physical and mental traits.




"I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a terrible idea!"



"I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a great idea!"




Mike



Jane

These personal opinions are clear, but they are **not suitable** as an academic stance.



## Task 2

### Analyze the language of a successful academic stance

Look at the table below. Jane and Mike improve their personal opinions in four ways to make them more appropriate for an academic audience. Identify what these four changes are. Record the changes in the column on the left.

	Mike	Jane	
	I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a terrible idea!	I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a great idea!	
Change made	I think that Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a terrible idea! ethically unacceptable.	I think that Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a great idea! ethically acceptable.	Stance is too personal/emotional, not reasonable, not justified and not critical.
	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is <b>mostly</b> ethically unacceptable.	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is, <b>on the whole</b> , ethically acceptable.	
	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is mostly ethically unacceptable <b>because it will lead to increased</b>	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is, on the whole, ethically acceptable <b>because parents have the moral</b>	

discrimination against the poor who will not be able to afford this type of technology.

responsibility to give their children the best opportunities in life they can afford.

Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is mostly ethically unacceptable because it will lead to increased discrimination against the poor who will not be able to afford this type of technology. **Although it is argued that this type of technology will improve the life of individual children by giving them more opportunities, the effect on society as a whole will be more social inequality for people too poor to afford the technology and social instability.**

Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is, on the whole, ethically acceptable because parents have the moral responsibility to give their children the best opportunities in life they can afford. **Although it has been claimed that this will lead to discrimination against people too poor to afford the technology, this is a reason to ensure that the technology is made accessible to as many people as possible through government control. Discrimination is not a reason to ban the technology itself.**

Stance is cautious, well-justified, critical and has an academic tone (not personal/emotional).



### Task 3

#### Identify and define a counter-argument and rebuttal

Look again at the final successful stance for Jane and Mike.

Identify which part of the stance is the counter-argument and which part is the rebuttal. Underline the counter-argument and circle the rebuttal.

Now, define the two terms.

**A counter-argument is** .....

.....

.....

**A rebuttal is** .....

.....

## Features of a successful academic stance

The following table summarizes the features of a successful academic stance which you have just been analyzing:

**A successful academic stance should be:**

- written using an **academic tone**

- **cautious**

- **well-justified**

- **critical**

**A successful academic stance should:**

- ▶ take out emotional adjectives/nouns/verbs and personal references such as "I think"

- ▶ include hedging when appropriate

- ▶ include explanations and citations when appropriate

- ▶ include counter-arguments and rebuttals when appropriate



### Task 4

#### Identify stance in an academic essay

Read the essay below and decide whether it was written by Jane or Mike by identifying stance. Does the essay support (like Jane) or not support (like Mike) the use of technology for embryo selection? You will find the stance in multiple places in the essay. Also, underline the writer's stance in the essay.

#### ESSAY

Consider two cases. Michele and Michael have two embryos ready for implantation. Embryo A has XY sex chromosomes. Embryo B has XX. Should they be allowed to reject one embryo based on gender? Sex selection technology is currently being practised to varying degrees in many countries, although it is almost universally illegal. Consider the second case of Sally and Sam. Their embryo A has a gene that is linked to the propensity to be overweight, while B does not. Should they be allowed to reject embryo A? It is a possibility that tests in the future could identify a propensity (not 100% probability) to certain traits related to appearance, although this is not possible now. However, as we rush to gain a deeper understanding of the link between genetics and why some of us are more beautiful, more intelligent, etc., it is necessary to ask ourselves whether it is advisable to use pre/post-pregnancy technology for embryo/

fetus selection of non-disease traits. This essay argues that the use of such technology is unwise because it has the potential to cause greater harm than good for society as a whole, leading to an increase in social instability and inequality. The issues raised in the two cases above will be used to support this stance throughout the essay.

The main argument supporting the use of pre/post-pregnancy technology for non-disease states, such as gender and appearance, is that parents have the moral responsibility to “select” the best children that they could have based on the information available to them. One major proponent of this argument is Professor Savulescu, Uehiro Professor of Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford. He believes that “couples (or single reproducers) should select the child, of the possible children they could have, who is expected to have the best life, or at least as good a life as the others, based on the relevant, available information” (Savulescu, 2002, p. 415). He believes that technology should be used to give parents as much information as possible about their future child, that they should be given free choice which child to have, and “advice as to which child will be expected to enter life with the best opportunity of having the best life” (p. 425). Admittedly, making decisions which are in the best interests of others is, of course, a moral good. However, people have a greater moral responsibility to act according to the good of society as a whole. Humans exist and thrive within a social network, and if that social network is harmed, we are all, in turn, harmed. This means that moral decisions need to be made primarily at the social level for the good of all and this technology has been shown to lead to certain types of social instability.

The current use of sex selection technology is the prime example of the link between pre/post-pregnancy technology and social instability. The use of this technology in countries where there is a “combination of son preference, easy access to sex-selection technologies and abortion” (Hesketh & Jiang, 2012, p. 3) has led to unbalanced sex ratio at birth (SRB) rates. For example, in 2011, the SRB for China was reported to be 118 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, as cited in Hesketh & Jiang, 2012) – 118 males for every 100 females. Extensive use of ultrasound screening and selective abortion has led to approximately 30 million more males under the age of 20 than females (Zhu, Li, & Hesketh, 2009). In India, one large-scale study reported that the SRB was 132 for second births when the first birth was a female and 139 for third births with two previous female births (Jha et al., 2006). While these skewed SRBs are also a result of better health care and food for boys, female infanticide and a high rate of death in childbirth (Allahbadia, 2002), it is clear from research that the

use of sex selection technologies plays a significant role in the high male-to-female ratios (Jha et al., 2006; Zhu, Li, & Hesketh, 2009).

The result of these unbalanced SRBs is that a significant proportion of men are unable to marry and this also leads to social instability. In the countries mentioned above, social status is strongly related to marital status. Men who are left unmarried are largely the poor and uneducated, further increasing social inequalities (Lichter, Anderson, & Hayward, 1995). High SRBs have been linked to increases in prostitution, kidnapping and trafficking of women in China (Tucker et al., 2005) and in other parts of Asia (Hudson & Den Boer, 2004). Hudson and Den Boer also attribute a recent large increase in dowry prices in parts of India to the shortage of women. All of the above can lead to social instability. While Savulescu might argue that the parents of these male children have ensured the “best life” for their child, this is not always true as many of these males are likely to suffer from low self-esteem if they can’t fulfill societal expectations such as marriage and procreation. One recent study using in-depth interviews, for example, showed that older unmarried men in Guizhou province reported feeling depressed and hopeless because of their single status (Zhou, Wang, Li, & Hesketh, 2011).

It is also important to look to the future and consider the ethical implications of developing pre/post-pregnancy technology. It is feasible that technology might develop in the future to allow screening for desirable attributes related to appearance. Ideals of beauty are social and cultural concepts. It has been shown that people who don’t meet those ideals suffer discrimination. For example, Judge and Cable (2004) found from an analysis of 45 studies that height was significantly correlated with career success and that a person who is 72 inches tall is likely to earn \$166,000 more over a career than someone who is 65 inches tall. Widespread discrimination has also been shown based on weight in multiple domains such as the workplace, education and health care (Puhl & Brownell, 2001). It might seem logical, therefore, that parents use such technology to ensure the “best life” for their children. In fact, if we look at the effect on society as a whole, as we did with sex selection, it seems that a widespread use of this technology would lead to even less tolerance for diversity than exists now and therefore greater social inequality for those without access to such technology for economic reasons. This would lead to greater discrimination. What this means is that while there might be benefits for individual children born from the use of this technology, on the societal level, the effect would be much greater social inequality.

Establishing an equitable and stable society is the responsibility of every individual who makes up that society. Establishing a society like this will sometimes require people to act against their own individual best interest for the sake of the greater good. The use of pre/post-pregnancy technology is an example of this. While selecting traits such as gender and appearance might lead to individuals having a “best life”, the harm that this does to society as a whole outweighs the benefits to the individual. There needs to be regular and timely consultation about this issue between policy makers, ethicists, medical and legal professionals, and the general public.

### References

- Allahbadia, G. (2002). The 50 million missing women. *Journal of Assisted Reproductive Genetics*, 19(9), 411–416.
- Hesketh, T., & Jiang, M. (2012). The effects of artificial gender imbalance. Science & Society Series on Sex and Science. *EMBO Report*, 13(6), 487–492.
- Hudson, V., & Den Boer, A. (2004). *Bare branches: The security implications of Asia's surplus male population*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jha, P., Kumar, R., Vasa, P., Dhingra, N., Thiruchelvam, D., & Moineddin, R. (2006.) Low female-to-male sex ratio of children born in India: National survey of 1.1 million households. *Lancet*, 367, 211–218.
- Judge, T., & Cable, D. (2004). The effect of physical height on workplace success and income: Preliminary test of a theoretical model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(3), 428–441.

(The remaining references have been taken out to save space.)

## Critical argumentation: Using counter-arguments and rebuttals

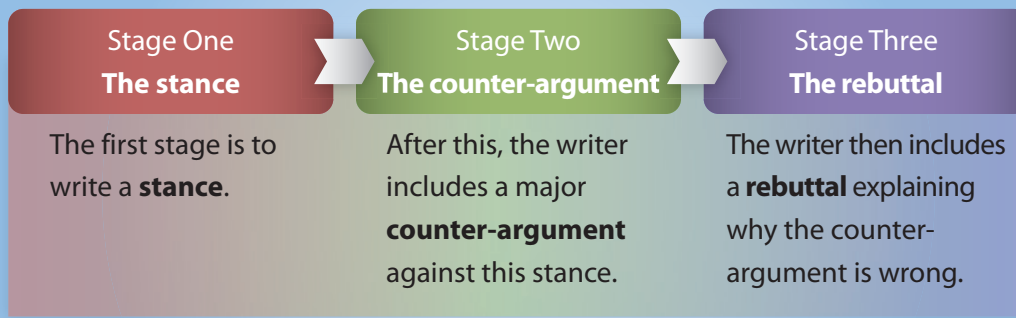
As you saw in Task 2, integrating counter-arguments and rebuttals into your academic writing is important because it strengthens your stance. It also shows that you:

- understand the complexities of the topic,
- are less biased, and
- have good critical thinking skills.

Your argumentation becomes **logically stronger** and **more persuasive** through the use of counter-arguments and rebuttals.



A typical critical argument structure looks like this:



Writing a **convincing rebuttal** is usually the hardest stage for students as it requires very good critical thinking skills. This three-stage critical argument process can be used in many ways to structure an academic text. You can often see the three stages **in one paragraph/section**. You can also see the three stages **throughout an essay or report**.



## Task 5

Identify the differences between three possible critical argument structures

There are **many** ways that this critical argument structure could be used to organize an essay. The table below shows you three ways. Analyze the three examples and:

1. fill in the boxes which are empty, and
2. discuss how this structure compares with the structure of the essays you wrote at secondary school.

	Structure One	Structure Two	Structure Three
Introduction	Stance	Stance	Stance
Paragraph 1	1st argument supporting stance	1st argument supporting stance	Counter-argument for stance + Rebuttal
Paragraph 2	2nd argument supporting stance	Counter-argument for 1 + Rebuttal	1st argument supporting stance + Counter-argument for 1 + Rebuttal

<b>Paragraph 3</b>		2nd argument supporting stance	
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Counter-argument for 1, 2 and 3 + Rebuttal		3rd argument supporting stance + Counter-argument for 3 + Rebuttal
<b>Conclusion</b>	Summary of stance and arguments 1, 2 and 3	Summary of stance and arguments 1 and 2	Summary of stance and arguments 1, 2 and 3



## Task 6

### Identify critical argument structure in an academic text

Read the essay again. Does the argument structure in the essay match Structure One, Two or Three from the table above?

*The argument structure in the essay matches Structure ..... from the table above.*

You have already underlined the stance in the essay. Now identify the rest of the critical argument structure in the essay by highlighting the following in different colours:

1. the counter-arguments
2. the rebuttals

**Label each of these** in the right column of the essay on pages 65–68.

The introduction has been done for you below:

ESSAY	Argument structure
<p>Consider two cases. Michele and Michael have two embryos ready for implantation. Embryo A has XY sex chromosomes. Embryo B has XX. Should they be allowed to reject one embryo based on gender? Sex selection technology is currently being practised to varying degrees in many countries, although it is almost universally illegal. Consider the second case of Sally and Sam. Their embryo A has a gene that is linked to the propensity to be overweight, while B does not. Should they be allowed to reject embryo A? It is a possibility that tests in the future could identify a propensity (not 100% probability) to certain traits related to appearance, although this is not possible now. However, as we rush to gain a deeper understanding of the link between genetics and why some of us are more beautiful, more intelligent, etc., it is necessary to ask ourselves whether it is advisable to use pre/post-pregnancy technology for embryo/fetus selection of non-disease traits. <u>This essay argues that the use of such technology is unwise because it has the potential to cause greater harm than good for society as a whole, leading to an increase in social instability and inequality.</u> The issues raised in the two cases above will be used to support this stance throughout the essay.</p>	<p>Stance</p>



## Task 7

### Practise expressing stance and using critical thinking skills

You are going to practise writing counter-arguments and rebuttals on six issues related to science, technology and ethics. To prepare for this, debate the six topics in groups of three. Debating will give you ideas for your writing.

Get into groups of three. Debate the six issues by playing one of the following roles:

- Student 1 argues **for** the stance.
- Student 2 argues **against** the stance.
- Student 3 **judgets** whether Student 1 or 2 has the most convincing arguments.

You will have **2 minutes** for each debate and the judge will have **30 seconds** to say who had the most convincing arguments and **why**.

Switch roles every time you debate a new issue. You will have two chances to play each role.

<b>Stance 1</b>  The use of live animals in scientific experiments is justifiable.	<b>Stance 2</b>  Euthanasia should be legal for terminally ill patients.	<b>Stance 3</b>  Genetically modified crops are necessary.
<b>Stance 4</b>  Nuclear energy should be the primary form of energy used by governments.	<b>Stance 5</b>  Factory farming (raising livestock such as chickens in confined spaces) should be banned.	<b>Stance 6</b>  Governments' use of surveillance should be strictly regulated and they should be required to notify people when they are being watched.



## Task 8

### Identify language used to signal the counter-argument and the rebuttal

Look at the words/phrases listed below. Some of these words/phrases are used in writing to **signal the counter-argument** to the reader and some are used to **signal the rebuttal**.

Admittedly,	Opponents/critics of this position believe that ...	
While it is true that ...	Nevertheless, ...	In fact ...
This claim is not justified because ...		It might seem that ...
This is not true because ...		

Put them in the right place in the table on page 73 and add two more examples of your own for each column. Some of the words/phrases might fit in both columns.

Language used to signal the counter-argument	Language used to signal the rebuttal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>My examples:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>My examples:</p>



## Task 9

### Practise writing counter-arguments and rebuttals

Now you should be ready to practise writing counter-arguments and rebuttals. Use the supporting and opposing arguments you and your group members used in the debates in Task 7 to write a critical stance for four of the issues you debated. You should do this by:

1. **adding a justification** for the stance,
2. **adding a counter-argument** against that stance,
3. **adding a rebuttal** which explains why the counter-argument is wrong,
4. indicating where you would need to **include a citation** to back up your stance, and
5. using some of the language from the table above to **signal** the counter-argument and the rebuttal.

The first stance has been done for you as an example.

**Issue 1:** Genetically modified crops are necessary **because the rising population requires the production of pest resistant crops with a high yield** [citation]. *Even though many opponents of genetic modification (GM) have claimed that these crops are a risk to our health* [citation], *there have been no reliable unbiased studies that have shown that the GM itself, rather than the pesticides that are sometimes used alongside the GM food, are harmful* [citation]. *GM food is so widespread now* [citation] *that if it were harmful to health, there would be evidence to prove it.*

**Issue 2:** Nuclear energy should be the primary form of energy used by governments  
*because...*

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**Issue 3:** Factory farming (raising livestock such as chickens in confined spaces) should be  
banned *because...*

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## Task 10

### Assess your partner's counter-arguments and rebuttals

Swap your work with your partner. Ask him or her to assess your writing using the criteria below:

	Peer assessment of Issue 2		Peer assessment of Issue 3	
You have a <b>clear and logical justification</b> for your stance.	Yes	No	Yes	No
You have a <b>clear and logical counter-argument</b> against the stance.	Yes	No	Yes	No
You have a <b>clear and logical rebuttal</b> which explains why the counter-argument is wrong.	Yes	No	Yes	No
You have correctly <b>indicated where the citations are needed</b> .	Yes	No	Yes	No
You have used <b>signalling language correctly</b> to show where the counter-argument and the rebuttal are.	Yes	No	Yes	No

## Hedging: The importance of being cautious

When you express a stance, you need to think about how strong you want to make that stance. You need to think about whether you can claim that something is:

<b>definitely</b> true	true <b>all the time</b>	true for <b>all people</b>	true in <b>all contexts</b>
<b>probably</b> true	true only for <b>some of the time</b>	true only for <b>some people</b>	true only in <b>some contexts</b>

It is important that you are **cautious** when expressing stance. If you over-generalize, you run the risk of being criticized by the person assessing your writing.



## Task 11

### List hedging words

The following table has three different categories of hedging words commonly used in academic writing. Add five examples to each category. Put them in order of strength.

Frequency	Certainty	Quantity	
all the time	definitely	all	<b>Strong</b>
-----	-----	-----	
-----	-----	-----	
-----	-----	-----	
-----	-----	-----	
infrequently	possibly	a small proportion	<b>weak</b>



## Task 12

### Improve a paragraph

The following paragraph has two problems:

1. The tone is too personal/emotional.
2. Some of the statements are not cautious enough. They need to be hedged.

Identify the words in the text that need changing. Correct the text.

1 I think it is really cruel to use live animals in experimental testing. But it should be  
 2 allowed because of the benefits it brings to human health. This kind of testing has led  
 3 to amazing improvements in medical treatments for cancer (Hausen et al., 2002) and  
 4 HIV (Rickman et al., 2009). It has led to the development of vaccines (Morgan et al.,  
 5 2000) and medical treatments such as insulin (Nagano et al., 2005). It has also allowed  
 6 scientists to determine the safe level of exposure to common chemicals (Vanderberg,



2010). Some opponents claim that these benefits are outweighed by the suffering which animals endure and that other types of testing should be used instead, such as the use of cell cultures. This technique should be used when possible; however, its use is limited. Tests using cell cultures can only show effects on the molecular level (Burns, 2005) whereas animal testing can show systematic effects around the body. Legislative regulations have been put in place in countries to stop animals being tortured in experimental research (Baumans, 2004). These regulations are largely based on the three “Rs” first described by Russell and Burch (1959) – Replacement, Reduction, Refinement. For example, 1. animal tests should be replaced by other techniques, when possible, 2. the number of animal used should be reduced when possible and 3. experimental techniques used should be refined to stop the agony and misery that the poor animals feel.



## Task 13

### Express stance in your own paragraph

Now, let's put everything you have learnt in this unit so far together.

Remember what you have learnt about writing a successful academic stance on page 65.

A successful academic stance should:

- be written using an **academic tone** (not emotional or personal),
- be **cautious** (include hedging where necessary),
- be **well-justified** (include explanations and citations), and
- be **critical** (include counter-arguments and rebuttals).

Write your own paragraph based on the stance that *euthanasia should be legal for terminally ill patients*. Use the notes on page 78 to help you.

## Euthanasia for terminally ill patients

- Aim = ↓ mental and physical suffering
- Doctors' ethical principle = act in the best interests of the patient (Herring, 2012)
- Not many beds in palliative care hospices (Zerzan et al., 2000)
- Wide-spread research = hospices don't give enough pain relief/counselling (Jennings et al., 2011)
- Terminal illness → lots of pain + depression (Natan, 2010)



## Homework

### Prepare for a tutorial discussion

Get together with your tutorial discussion group members and choose one of the following issues for your next tutorial discussion:

#### Issue 1

The use of live animals in scientific experiments

#### Issue 2

Euthanasia for terminally ill patients

#### Issue 3

Genetically modified crops

#### Issue 4

Nuclear energy

#### Issue 5

Factory farming (raising livestock such as chickens in confined spaces)

#### Issue 6

Governments' use of surveillance

To prepare, search for information on Google Scholar and your library's electronic databases for at least three sources on this issue. Read the texts and take notes. Include the references for your source texts.



## ACADEMIC SPEAKING

### Making your academic discussions more critical

Academic discussions are usually based around issues which are debatable. Such discussions require you to form a personal stance based on your knowledge and reading.

During the discussion, it is likely that there will be at least one time when you disagree with someone's stance. You should see this moment as an opportunity to **deepen** the discussion and make it more **critical** by **challenging the stance**. It is through disagreement that **deeper learning** happens. This **deep learning** is **highly valued** at university.

There are many types of challenges that you will likely make in a discussion. The two main types of challenges are:

- challenging the stance, and
- challenging the source that the stance is based on.

Some examples are listed in the table below:

Challenging the stance	Challenging the source
1. Stance is <b>wrong</b> .	1. Source is <b>too old</b> .
2. Stance is <b>over-generalized</b> .	2. Source is <b>biased/not reliable</b> .
3. Stance <b>appeals to emotion rather than logic</b> .	3. <b>Ideas/statistics</b> in source <b>don't support the stance</b> (may be in wrong context/wrong time frame).
4. Stance <b>contains a cause/effect relationship which is wrong</b> (might be correlation instead).	4. Evidence for stance is given but source is <b>missing</b> .



## Task 1

### Identify types of challenges

Below are a series of stances on the topic of genetically modified (GM) crops. Write the most appropriate type of challenge in the right column using the list on page 80.

Two examples have been given. There is more than one possible answer for some stances.

Challenging the stance	What type of challenge could you use?
"People want GM food labelled."	
"GM crops cause cancer. Rates of cancer have risen at the same time as the number of GM crops has risen."	
"All GM crops are unsafe."	<i>Stance is wrong.</i>
"We have to have GM crops, otherwise poor people will starve."	
Challenging the source	What type of challenge could you use?
"GM crops are more profitable for farmers. Even though GM seeds cost more, the overall cost from seed purchase to harvest is lower than conventional crops. An article from the <i>Journal of Trends in Plant Science</i> stated that GM seeds are, on average, 20% more expensive."	
"Risk analysis shows that the benefits of GM crops far outweigh the negatives. This is confirmed by a 1996 study from the <i>Journal of Nature Biotechnology</i> which analyzed the case studies of 20 different GM crops."	
"Too much agricultural land is made up of GM crops. The percentage in the US is 16.5%."	<i>Evidence for stance is given but source is missing.</i>
"GM crops have the same environmental impact as non-GM crops. For example, a report by Monsanto* shows that Roundup Ready corn has no worse impact than conventional corn."	

\*Monsanto is one of the largest companies producing genetically engineered seeds.

## The language of polite challenges

You might feel shy about challenging each other's ideas. Remember, challenging each other will lead to a more critical discussion and, in turn, deeper learning on your part. It will also provide your peers an opportunity to defend their stance.

So, how can you challenge in a way that is polite and non-threatening?

**The first way** is to **use hedging to soften the challenge**.

Instead of saying "*That's not true because ...*", you can say:

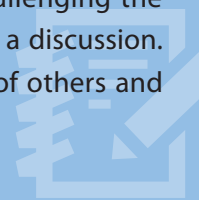
- *I don't think that's true because ...*
- *That might/may not be true because ...*
- *That's probably not true because ...*
- *I wonder if that is true because ...*

**The second way** is to **change the challenge from a statement into a question**.

A question is less threatening than a statement. It also requires an answer and this helps to keep the conversation moving.

- *Have you thought about ... ?*
- *What do you think about ... ?*
- *What about ... ?*
- *Are you sure ... ?*
- *Is it possible ... ?*
- *Is it likely that ... ?*

Challenging is important, but it should not be done **all the time**. If you challenge very frequently, the discussion will become dysfunctional. Also, challenging the stance of others should not be the only thing that you contribute to a discussion. You need to have a good balance between challenging the stance of others and adding your own stance to the discussion.





## Task 2

### Identify polite challenges

Look again at each of the stances. Write a challenging statement and a challenging question for each which is polite and non-threatening. Make sure your challenging statement/question focuses on the type of challenge you identified in Task 1 on page 81. Two examples have been given below.

Challenging the stance	Example of challenging statement	Example of challenging question
"People want GM food labelled." <b>[stance is over-generalized]</b>		
"GM crops cause cancer. Rates of cancer have risen at the same time as the number of GM crops has risen." <b>[cause/effect relationship is wrong]</b>		
"All GM crops are unsafe." <b>[stance is incorrect]</b>	<i>I <b>don't think</b> that this is possible. If it were true, a large percentage of the population would be sick.</i>	<i>Are you sure that is right?</i>
"We have to have GM crops, otherwise poor people will starve." <b>[stance is based on emotion rather than logic]</b>		



## Task 3

### Practise critical questioning

Get into groups of three. Debate three issues you discussed previously.

#### Issue 1

The use of live animals in scientific experiments

#### Issue 2

Euthanasia for terminally ill patients

#### Issue 3

Genetically modified crops

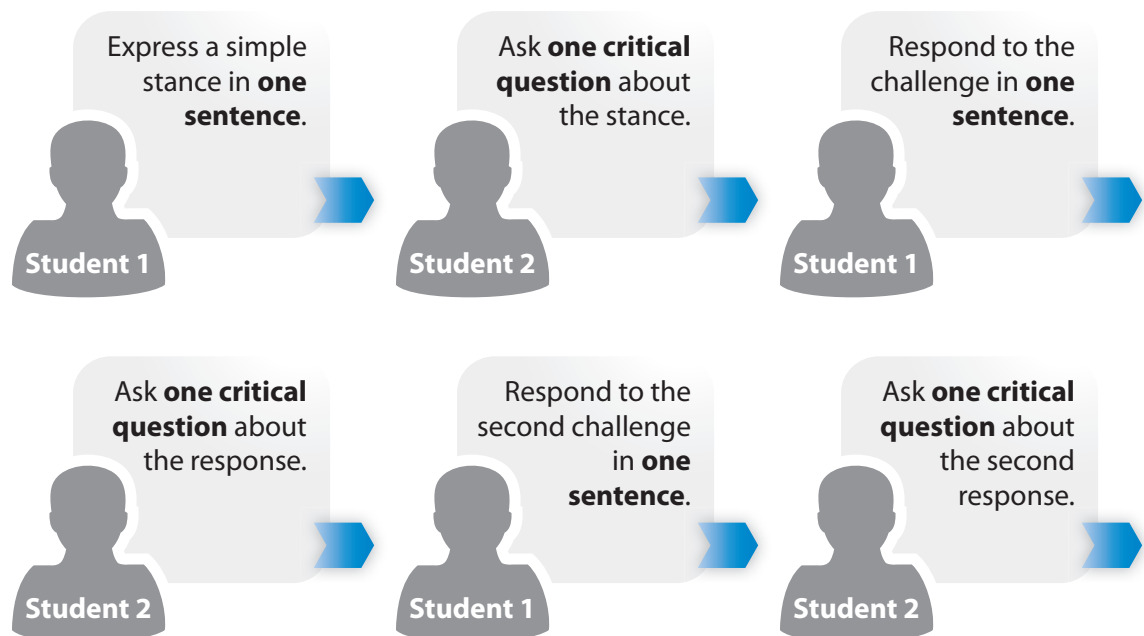
For each issue, take on one of the following roles:

- Student 1: express your stance on the topic.
- Student 2: ask challenging questions about the stance.
- Student 3: give feedback on the **logic of the challenging questions** and **whether the challenging questions were polite**.

Switch roles every time you debate a new issue.

You will have **two minutes** for each debate and the judge will have **one minute** to give feedback.

The flowchart below shows how to structure your debate:



Student 2 should only ask challenging questions about the stance, not about sources, as Student 1 will not have any sources.



## Task 4

### Participate in a tutorial discussion

Now, hold a 30-minute tutorial discussion with your group members on the topic that you chose on page 79.





## Task 5

### Analyze your strengths and weaknesses

Take five minutes to fill in the form below. Rate your overall performance on each criterion as follows:

**1** = I did this most of the time      **2** = I did this some of the time      **3** = I rarely did this

#### My stance was:

**clear** – e.g. I changed the written language in the source to my own spoken language.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**concise** – e.g. I expressed one idea at a time.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**critical** – e.g. I acknowledged that academic ideas are complex, not black and white.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

#### I interacted well by:

**linking my ideas smoothly into the discussion** – e.g. I linked my point to a point that had been mentioned before.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**using active listening skills** – e.g. I used eye contact, nodding, expressions of agreement.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**not dominating** – e.g. I allowed other students to break into the discussion.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

#### My language was:

**fluent** – e.g. I was able to speak without a lot of hesitations.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**accurate** – e.g. I was able to use a range of grammar and vocabulary to express complex academic ideas.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**clear** – e.g. I used stress, intonation and pausing to express my meaning.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

#### I cited:

**from sources to support my stance** – e.g. I didn't just rely on my own personal opinion in the discussion.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

**by mentioning the reliability of my source** – e.g. I mentioned that the information I cited came from a reliable source (*The Journal of XX/The World Health Organization*).

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

#### This Unit's Focus

I asked critical questions when necessary.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

I interacted politely and in a non-threatening way.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

#### Ideas for future improvement