



THE GREAT DEBATE

TOPIC #1: THE ENVIRONMENT

DEBATER #1: Free trade harms the environment as natural reserves of raw materials are used up when you export. Also, countries with strict pollution controls may find that consumers import goods from other countries where legislation is less stringent and pollution allowed.

DEBATER #2: Trade and trade agreements help improve environmental laws in the U.S. and in other countries. International trade agreements require the United States to apply the same standards to imported products that it applies to domestic products. Liberalized trade, when two countries open their markets, produces higher incomes and economic growth, making it possible for other countries to improve their environmental laws and law enforcement. Free trade also helps to improve environmental protection by lowering barriers on the sale of environmental technologies and by enabling new investments in environmental infrastructure.

TOPIC #2: TRADE AND JOB LOSSES

DEBATER #1: Trade is responsible for many factories closing and job losses in the United States. It's time we stop "giving away" jobs to foreign competitors. I know of several people who have lost their manufacturing jobs.

DEBATER #2: Actually, technology is the force driving this change in manufacturing, while trade helps move it along. In many cases, automation means fewer people are needed to accomplish the same task. For example, it used to be that a person would visit a bank teller to take out money, but now most people use ATMs. Or just go to an airport where you'll see many travelers now using kiosks to check in rather than agents. Studies show that trade accounts for only about 3 percent of mass layoffs in the United States. The key is providing worker retraining. There are many new opportunities in high-tech sectors, such as "clean" technology and others. Plus, did you know that in the manufacturing sector, there is actually a major shortage of skilled workers? We must continue to help our workers adjust to the changing global marketplace.

TOPIC #3: WHAT DOES TRADE MEAN FOR ME?

DEBATER #1: Okay, so trade has many benefits, including jobs. But what's in it for me now? I've not yet started my career, so why should I care?

DEBATER #2: Many of your parents' jobs might well depend on exports; some might even own their own businesses. If your parent is an architect, for example, he or she might be designing a building for construction in Asia, Europe, South America, the Middle East or just about anywhere else. Has your family or friends ever hosted a foreign exchange student? That's a services trade because the student (and their family when visiting) spends money here that contributes to our economy. But there's a lot more to trade for you, too. Think about when you go shopping with friends. The laws of economics say if there are more products from more manufacturers, then they'll all be competing to have you as a customer. As a result, you'll pay lower prices and be able to select from more variety. Take cell phones, for example. Many of you might have shopped around for the "best deal" or the "coolest" design. That increased competition means better quality and the latest technology for less money.