

A Great Debate: For Grades 6-8



The mission of **RetightNY** is to educate and inspire all people everywhere to protect the Earth's environment. We can all help by doing something simple and doing something now. Switch your light bulbs from incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs (**CFL**) and convince others to do the same. Changing your light bulbs will not only have a big impact on the amount of money you save on your electric bill, but also the amount of energy used and the carbon emissions produced.



Your mission: Convince your class that your position is the right position.

Here's the plan:



1 - Decide how you feel about this statement: Saving electricity doesn't just save money, it also saves the planet.

Agree

Disagree

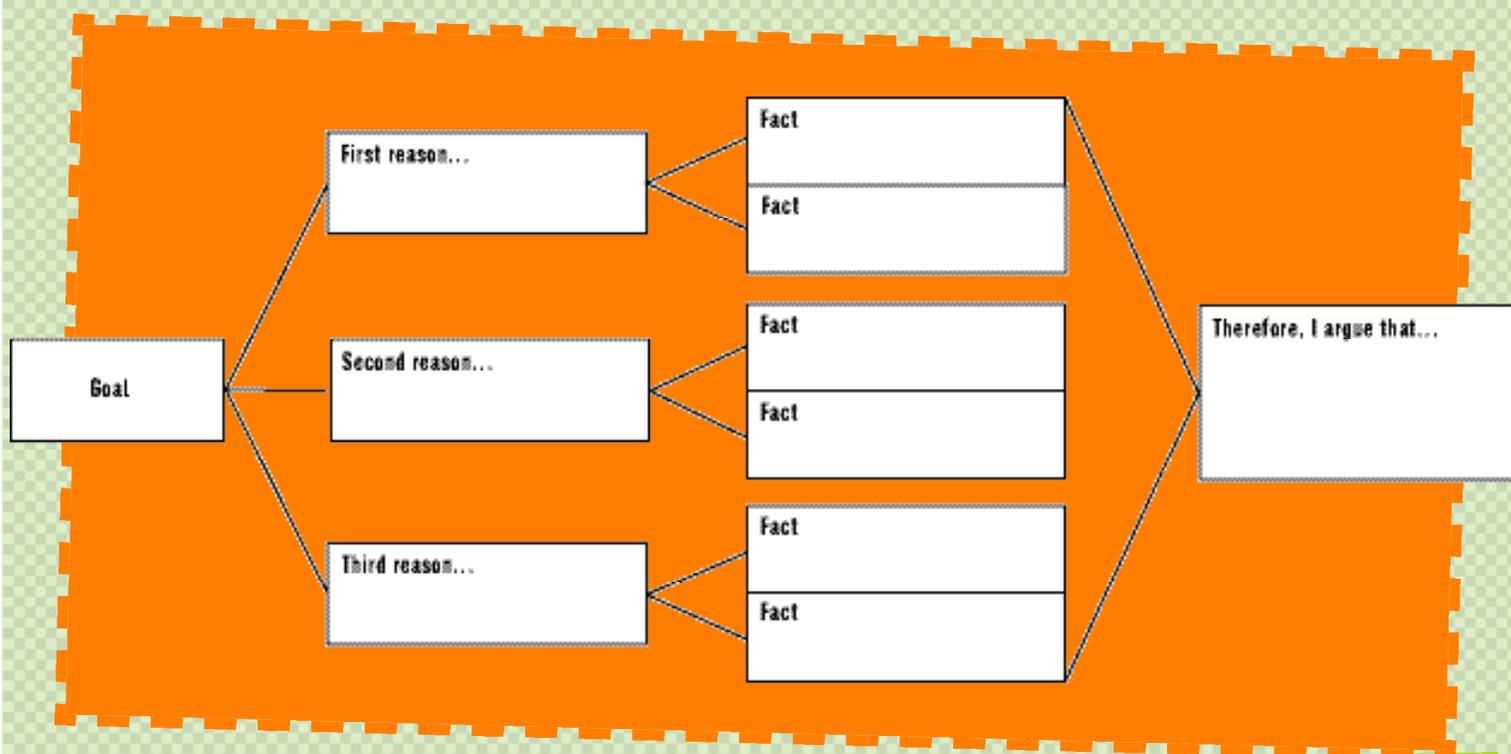
2 - Support your position by learning as much as you can about CFLs, carbon emissions, fossil fuels and coal burning. Use the Relight Web site (www.relightny.com), the Internet and the library as research tools to help you.

3 - Organize your thoughts using the Persuasion Map. Hint: Don't forget the strategies of persuasion. Use facts and figures to make your point, and be sure to keep your audience in mind.

Persuasion Map



Copy the Persuasion Map on a piece of paper and use it to help you with your argument.



Teacher Page

Objectives:

Students will be able to discuss and answer the following questions:

- How can we have an impact on the Earth's environment by persuading our peers to conserve energy?
- How can we persuade others to change light bulbs?

Vocabulary: **Climate:** The average weather conditions of a region.

Climate Change: Any long-term, lasting change in the weather patterns of an area.

Fossil Fuels: Fuel made up of the remains of organisms preserved in the Earth's crust with a high hydrogen and carbon content.

Global Warming: An increase of the average temperature of the Earth.

Greenhouse Effect: The effect that is produced when greenhouse gases trap the solar radiation in the Earth's atmosphere and warm the planet.

Renewable Energy: Energy resources that can be made again in a short period of time. Sunlight and wind are examples of renewable energy.

Materials:

Persuasion Map (included).

Computers with Internet access.

Books and articles about global warming, the Earth's environment and fossil fuels.

Lesson:

Ask students how they feel about the following statement: **Conserving electricity doesn't just save money, it also saves the environment.** Students may write on their worksheet or raise their hands to indicate whether they agree or disagree.

Split the class into two groups: **pro**—the students who agree with the statement and **con**—those who disagree. Place students who agree with the statement on one team, and place the students who disagree on the other.

In the two groups, have students research the following topics: CFLs, carbon emissions, fossil fuels and coal burning, to support their positions. Use the Relight Web site (www.relightny.com), the Internet and the library as research tools.

Some other good sites are:

- Nrdc.org
- Stopglobalwarming.org
- Adventureecology.com
- Need.org
- Planetfriendly.net

Give both teams the Persuasion Map to fill out. They may work as a group or in pairs. Give students a few days to gather the information they need to support their statements and organize their thoughts using the Persuasion Map.

Setting up a debate in your classroom:

1. Begin the debate with the pro side speaking first. Allow them 3-5 minutes of uninterrupted time to explain their position.
2. Repeat for the con side.
3. Give both sides about three minutes to confer and prepare for their rebuttal.
4. Begin the rebuttals with the con side and give them three minutes to speak. All members must participate equally.
5. Repeat for the pro side.
6. Allow the audience to ask questions of the debating teams.

Service Project:

Have students use their newfound powers of persuasion to convince their elected officials to do something about reducing the carbon emissions in their state, city or town, or to write an opinion/editorial (op-ed) piece in the local newspaper convincing their neighbors. Both projects allow students to get their opinions out to the public in a thoughtful way.

Help students decide who they want to write to. Always make sure to address the recipient in a respectful way. The letter should be no longer than 600 words. Students should use facts and be specific with concerns and requests, and offer a solution to the problem.

Some great Web sites for helping students find out how to contact their local and state officials:

- globalcomputing.com/states.html will help students find your state's official Web site.
- senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm provides a list of all senators.
- forms.house.gov/wyr/welcome.shtml will give your representative's contact information.

Students who prefer to write an op-ed piece in the local paper should read the opinion pieces regularly to learn what gets published. How do authors use persuasion to make their case?

- The New York Times
- Washington Post
- The Los Angeles Times
- Boston Globe

Reflection:

Have students sit in a circle, on the floor or at their desks, and give one word to describe how they felt about what they learned in this lesson on the environment and global warming. This is called a whip around, meaning the idea moves quickly.

Persuasion Map Sample

