

The Perfect Pizza

Time: 1 hour

Grades: 1-6

Objective: Understand ideas of debate, compromise, and negotiation

Lesson Plan

1. Introduce legislative concepts and vocabulary. There are many different ways of solving problems. When a group of people share a common problem or challenge, they often have different ideas about how to solve it, and need to decide which solution to pursue. The democratic and legislative process are all about finding a fair way to decide on a solution that most people agree fixes the problem.
2. Lead students in coming up with definitions for the following terms and ideas. Ask for examples of times in their lives when they have debated, negotiated, or compromised with someone else.
 - Legislator
 - Debate
 - Negotiation
 - Compromise
3. As a class, design a perfect pizza (or cookie, or school lunch, etc.) Ask students to raise their hands and share the qualities of a perfect pizza. Thin crust or thick? Red sauce? Extra cheese? What kind of toppings? When disagreement arises, guide students through a way of working out a fair decision (usually, a vote by show of hands – with older students, you might select a speaker for and against each decision to try to persuade the others). Raise the issue of minority rights – what if one student has a gluten or dairy allergy? Should we consider using different ingredients so they can all share the pizza? Can we always accommodate everyone’s needs perfectly? What are some other fair alternatives?

Adaptations and Extension Activities

Formal debate. Before beginning the discussion or cookie design process, divide students into small groups and have each group design and illustrate their own perfect cookie. Bring the groups together to present their cookies and try to persuade the class to vote for their option. Allow back-and-forth debate and “amendments” to combine parts of several cookies to get broader consensus.

Research. Legislators often want to learn more about the specifics of a proposal before they make up their mind. It’s also important to keep track of how much the proposal costs! As the class brainstorms their pizza recipe, ask questions leading to more details about the process and look up the answers online as you go. For example, making a pizza requires flour, red sauce, and all kinds of toppings. How much? How much do they cost? Is it worth getting fancy toppings that cost more, if it means buying less pizza? Legislators can ask staff experts and other people affected for more information about a proposal, but they ultimately have to decide the best course.