



Teacher Guide: Hot Take Sports Podcast

1. Assessment Overview

Name of Assessment: *Hot Take Sports Podcast*

Purpose:

This assessment gives students the chance to step into the world of sports broadcasting by creating their own debate-style podcast modeled after shows like *ESPN First Take* or *Fox Sports Undisputed*. Students will select a “hot topic” related to the sport or unit currently being taught in class. Working individually, in pairs, or small groups, they will record a 3–5 minute segment where they argue opposing sides, defend their claims, and build their case using evidence and reasoning.

Big Picture Goals:

This task fuses literacy and physical education in a way that feels natural and engaging. It builds critical speaking, listening, and persuasive writing skills while deepening students’ understanding of the sport. The activity supports ELA standards in argumentation and evidence use, physical education standards in reflection and strategy, and broader academic goals such as collaboration, communication, and media literacy. Most importantly, it models how literacy in PE doesn’t have to look like “schoolwork.” By mimicking the formats they already consume outside the classroom—debate shows, podcasts, sports media—students learn that their voices and ideas are just as valuable as their physical performance.

This is an assessment that creates buy-in by bridging classroom skills with real-world formats, showing students how literacy can be relevant, exciting, and authentic—even in the gym.

- **Physical Education Standards:** Can be used to deepen understanding of rules, strategies, and decision-making within the unit sport.
- **Literacy Standards:** Practice persuasive argumentation, evidence-based reasoning, and oral communication.
- **Long-Term Outcomes:** Build student confidence in expressing opinions, analyzing strategy, and making connections between sports and real-world debates.

- **Classroom Culture:** Normalize discussion, disagreement, and debate as natural parts of PE. Shift the focus from only *doing* to also *thinking and expressing*. This assessment taps into student interests—even when they don’t directly match the day’s activity—and uses them as a bridge to the skill work you’re asking for in class, turning curiosity and opinion into purposeful practice.

2. Preparation Requirements

Teacher Prep:

- Decide on recording format (audio only, video, or live presentation).
- Prepare tech: phones, tablets, or Chromebook microphones (Google Classroom, Canvas submission, etc.).
- **Choose or brainstorm sport-related “hot topics” tied to the current unit** (e.g., “Should volleyball rally scoring be changed?” or “Is man-to-man defense better than zone?”). These prompts can connect directly to the unit skills you’re teaching, or—if you really want to boost engagement and content-area connections—draw from current sports headlines. Even if the topics don’t directly match the skills practiced in class, they help students build a stronger connection to the sport, which in turn increases motivation to participate in skill work.

Consider the following:



Volleyball

- Should rally scoring go to 25 or 21 points?
- Is serving underhand still a valuable skill to teach?
- Should a libero be allowed at the middle school level?
- Is blocking at the net more important than digging in the back row?



Basketball

- Is man-to-man defense better than zone?
- Should the three-point line be closer for middle school?
- Is dribbling or passing the more important skill?
- Should dunking be banned in middle school games?

Soccer

- Is penalty shootout a fair way to decide games?
- Should offsides be simplified or removed in youth soccer?
- Is defense or offense more important for team success?
- Should headers be banned for younger players?
- Is futsal better for skill development than outdoor soccer?

General / Cross-Sport Hot Topics

- Should PE class focus more on competition or participation?
- Is teamwork more important than individual skill?
- Is sportsmanship more important than skill?
- Is it better to be a “specialist” (great at one skill) or “all-around player”?

Headline Style – “Debate Bait” Topics

- LeBron or MJ — Who’s the real GOAT?
- Steph Curry: Changed the game or ruined basketball?
- Should college players be one-and-done or stay longer?
- WNBA stars deserve equal pay?
- **Tom Brady or Patrick Mahomes — Who’s the better QB?**
- **Should penalty kicks decide championships?**
- **Is baseball still “America’s pastime”?**
- Fighting in Hockey— tradition or problem?
- Is cheerleading a sport?
- March Madness or the Super Bowl — which is bigger?
- Should athletes use their platform for politics?
- Participation trophies — good for kids or not?
- Is winning everything, or does fun matter more?
- School sports vs. club sports — which prepares athletes better?

Student Prep:

- Students should already have baseline knowledge of the unit sport (rules, positions, basic strategies).
- Students should have had practice with respectful discussion, listening, and turn-taking.
- Brief exposure to debate/podcast formats (e.g., short clip

from *First Take*) to model tone and style.

3. Implementation Steps

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Introduce the assessment and share a short clip of a sports debate show. Highlight persuasive techniques (claims, evidence, rebuttals).
2. Present a list of 5–8 possible hot topics (or let students propose their own with approval).
3. Students form pairs or trios and select a topic.
4. Groups brainstorm arguments for both sides, then decide who will take which stance.
5. Students script key talking points (not word-for-word, but bullet outlines).
6. Record or perform the debate (3–5 minutes).
7. Submit final product digitally (Google Classroom, Canvas, etc.).

Classroom Management Notes:

- This assessment will be completed primarily **outside of class** so that physical activity time remains the priority.
- Use class time for **short check-ins**: quick brainstorms, mini-conferences, or idea-sharing moments that guide students toward productive work without replacing activity.
- Encourage students to work in **pairs or trios** so every voice is included and the workload feels manageable.
- Provide **structured support in the margins** of class (e.g., exit slip prompts, quick “debate starter” questions, or end-of-warm-up pair discussions) to help groups stay on track.
- “Watch-fors” during any in-class prep: students drifting off-topic, one voice dominating, or arguments shifting from professional to personal.

4. Student Instructions

Teacher Script Example:

“For this assessment, you’ll take on the role of sports broadcasters—think ESPN *First Take* or *Undisputed*. Your job is to pick a hot sports topic tied to what we’ve been working on in class, and prepare to debate it. You’ll make your case, back it up with evidence, and respond to your partner’s points. In class, I’ll give you quick opportunities to brainstorm topics, practice a few

lines, or get feedback, but most of the preparation and recording will happen on your own. You don't need a word-for-word script, but you do need clear talking points. Aim for a 3–5 minute recording, as if it's going out live on the air."

Accommodations/Modifications:

- Provide sentence starters for ELL students ("One reason I believe...", "Some people might say..., but...").
- Allow oral outline submissions for students with writing difficulties.
- Permit shorter recordings (2 minutes) for students with speech challenges, or pair them with a peer who can carry more of the speaking load.
- Offer visual brainstorming templates for students who need structure.

5. Scoring & Evaluation

Rubric/Checklist Criteria:

- **Content Knowledge (PE Focus):** Did students show accurate understanding of the sport and its strategies?
- **Argument & Evidence (Literacy):** Did they present clear claims, evidence, and at least one counterargument/rebuttal?
- **Collaboration:** Did all group members participate?
- **Delivery:** Was the tone, pacing, and clarity appropriate for a "broadcast"?

Recording Method:

- Peer/teacher rubric (paper or Google Form).
- Optional self-reflection exit slip: "What's one strength of your debate? What's one area to improve?"

6. Why It Works

 **Engagement:** This assessment works because it doesn't feel like schoolwork—it feels like stepping into sports culture. Students recognize the debate format from ESPN talk shows, YouTube channels, and social media debates, so buy-in happens instantly. Framing the task as "your own sports podcast" gives them a chance to perform, not just complete. The roles—analyst, broadcaster, commentator—feel authentic, and even quieter students often find confidence behind the microphone.

✓ **Literacy:** *Hot Take Podcast* is packed with literacy practice disguised as sports talk. Students are forming claims, using evidence, addressing counterarguments, and organizing their ideas with purpose—all hallmarks of argumentative and persuasive writing. The best part? They don't even realize they're doing high-level academic work. They're rehearsing communication skills, structuring thought, and refining tone—all through a context they care about.

✓ **PE-Friendly:** This task deepens understanding of gameplay without cutting into activity time. Students go beyond participation to analyze the *why* behind the sports they play—why one strategy works better, why one rule change affects performance. The bulk of the recording happens outside of class, but short in-class prep prompts or peer debates can spark the ideas they'll use later. Instead of taking away from play, it enhances it—students step back into the gym seeing the game through a strategist's eyes.

✓ **Culture Builder:** Few tasks build voice and confidence like this one. Students learn that disagreement can be respectful, that opinions deserve space, and that communicating clearly is as important as performing physically. For students who might not dominate on the court, this gives them a platform to shine intellectually. For athletes, it challenges them to *explain* their instincts. Over time, your class culture shifts—students begin to see that thinking, speaking, and reflecting are all part of performance.

✓ **Focus Builder:** *Sports talk is structured thinking under pressure.* The format forces students to listen, organize thoughts quickly, and respond respectfully in real time—skills that transfer directly to teamwork and communication in gameplay. It turns debate into mental conditioning: sharp, focused, and strategic.

✓ **Equity & Access:** Because *Hot Take Podcast* values voice over physical ability, every student has an entry point. The kid who doesn't love competition still contributes meaningfully, and the athlete who usually leads by example learns to lead with language. It's a rare PE task where every student—writer, thinker, speaker, or doer—can excel.

