

COTE YOUTH DAY 2018

DEBATE GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Debaters

About Debating

A Debate is a structured argument in which two sides speak alternately for and against a particular contention (the motion). Each person is allocated a time they are allowed to speak for and interjections are carefully controlled. You have no choice as to the motion for your Debate, and may have to support opinions with which you do not normally agree. Debating challenges you to analyze issues without personal bias. You must provide a logical basis for the opinions you offer in a Debate.

A good Debate is an argument, the object of which is to persuade people – the audience and Judges – either that a certain state of affairs exists or a certain course should be taken or rejected. Debating is *not* about personal abuse, irrational attacks or purely emotional appeals. In persuading people, a Debater must build up his or her own individual case while at the same time presenting a consistent and complementary line of argument with their team colleague that rebuts the case of their opposition. In the Debate, you will be expected to:

- Assemble and organize effective arguments
- Persuade and entertain your audience
- Use language and logic to convince people that your arguments outweigh those of your opposition.

The following points are critical for Debaters:

- Debating is not the same as public speaking – public speaking is only one of the skills you will learn from the Debate.
- Do **not** read out your presentations or memorize them word for word.
- Be prepared to be flexible: you must reply to most of the arguments the other team are making.
- Debating is about thinking on your feet and speaking spontaneously.

Learn about Debating Rules and Procedures including:

- Proper Behaviour in a Debate and the Standing Orders
- The roles of the Chairman, Timekeeper and Judges
- The format and Timing of a Debate
- The Specific Roles of each Speaker/Debater
- Defining a Motion
- Points of Information
- Think about both sides of the Debate

Prepare Carefully:

- Research your Motion
- Outline a structure for your argument *as a Team*
- Structure your individual presentations, paying careful attention to timing
- Prepare short notes
- Have a mock Debate to rehearse

There are two areas of debating that demand quick thinking:

- 1. Points of Information:** The Judges will expect Debaters to offer and to accept Points of Information. Offering Points of Information (even if they are not accepted by the other side) shows that you are interested and active in the Debate, and accepting Points of Information shows that you are confident of your arguments and prepared to defend them.
- 2. Rebuttal:** You must address the arguments that the other Team comes up with, even those you actually agree with. Be prepared to challenge your opponents' arguments by refuting or disproving them, questioning their relevance, or by pointing out inconsistencies between your opponents' different arguments.

Guidelines for Adjudicators

The Adjudicators in the Debate perform three important functions:

1. They decide which team moves to the next round.
2. They provide an explanation of the reasons for that decision.
3. They provide constructive criticism and advice to the Debaters.

The Adjudicators' task is to determine which team is most convincing in each debate.

Adjudicators must watch the debates objectively, putting aside their own views on the Motion, and should adopt the role of an *average reasonable person* with an *average reasonable knowledge* of the subject under Debate, but with *expert knowledge of the rules of Debating*.

Adjudicators must not be influenced by personal likes and dislikes, or preconceived opinions on issues, and should disregard any prejudice of the audience.

The Adjudicators are not required to maintain order or supervise time limits during the Debate. These tasks are performed by the Chairman and the Timekeeper respectively. However, Adjudicators should consider any breaches of order or time limits in their assessment of the Debaters.

GUIDANCE FOR TIMEKEEPERS

- Timekeepers will be provided with a stopwatch and a bell. Signals must be loud enough to be heard by everyone.
- Please keep a record of how long each Speaker talks and give it to the Judges when they retire.
- The clock should only be stopped if there is an intervention by the Chairman. Do not stop the clock for Points of Information or laughter.

Signals should be made as follows:

- **For the Main Presentations** i.e. the First Proposition and First Opposition (each is allocated 8 minutes)
 - i. One bell after 1 minute
 - ii. One signal after 6 minutes
 - iii. A double bell at 8 minutes
 - iv. Continuous bells after 8½ minutes

• **For the second presentations** i.e. Second Proposition and Second Opposition Presentations (each is allocated 7 minutes)

- i. One bell after 1 minute
- ii. One signal after 6 minutes
- iii. A double bell at 7 minutes
- iv. Continuous bells after 7½ minutes

• **For the Summary Presentations** i.e. the Opposition summary presentation and the Proposition summary presentation (each allocated 4 minutes)

- i. One bell after 3 minutes (to indicate that one (1) minute is left)
- ii. Double bell at 4 minutes
- iii. Keep ringing the bell after 4½ minutes

GUIDANCE FOR THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman is asked to read the “Rules of the Debate”, Technical Rules for Debates and the Guidelines for Timekeepers.

• The Chairman’s role is to ensure that the Debates run as smoothly as possible. He or she is responsible for controlling the Debate.

• The Chairman has absolute control over all procedural aspects of the Debates, and his or her decision on these matters is final. Procedural rules are outlined in the Standing Orders.

The Role of Each Debater

GENERAL

- Each Debate has a Proposition side, and an Opposition side. The job of the Proposition is to advocate the motion, while the job of the Opposition is to refute the motion.
- Each speaker is required to move forward to face the audience, recognize the Chairman and then address the audience. Speakers should not address their presentations to the Opposing Team, it is the audience and adjudicators that they should be seeking to persuade.

THE FIRST PROPOSITION SPEAKER

- The First Proposition Speaker has eight minutes for his or her presentation.
- The First Proposition Speaker must **define the motion** and justify it if need be. In defining the motion, the Speaker describes exactly what the basis for the Debate will be.
- Then he or she must outline the case the Proposition Team will put forward and explain which Speaker will deal with which arguments.
- The First Proposition Speaker should then develop his or her own arguments and finish with a short summary of his or her main points.

THE FIRST OPPOSITION SPEAKER

- The First Opposition Speaker has eight minutes for his or her presentation.
- The First Opposition Speaker must respond to the definition. In some Debates the First Opposition speaker challenges the Proposition’s definition.
- The First Opposition Speaker must rebut the arguments of the Proposition and explain why there is a difference between the two sides.

- The First Opposition Speaker should outline the structure of the Opposition Team's case, and must begin to develop the Opposition's case, with arguments and proof.

THE SECOND PROPOSITION AND OPPOSITION SPEAKERS (The Second Speakers)

- Each of the second Speakers has seven minutes in which to speak.
- The second Speakers on either Team should divide their time between rebutting points made by their opponents and continuing with their side of the argument (i.e. developing additional arguments).
- At the end of a second presentation, the second Speaker should give a brief summary of the whole argument of his or her side.

THE SUMMARY SPEAKERS

- Each of the Summary Speakers has four minutes in which to speak.
- Either Speaker on the Team may make the summary presentation, however. The Team must tell the Chairman who will make the summary presentation before the Debate begins.
- The summary must focus on major areas of difference between the two sides, and is intended to review the major issues of the Debate. The Summary Speaker looks at the Debate as a whole, instead of reviewing individual points.
- The Summary Speaker must reiterate the arguments of his or her side, rebut the arguments of the other side, and demonstrate how his or her side's arguments are superior.
- *No new arguments may be introduced into summary presentations.* A summary reviews the Debate that has already happened; it does not start a new one. New arguments will be penalized.

NOTE: Each Speaker is required to move forward to face the audience, recognize the Chairman and then address the audience. Avoid addressing the presentation to the Opposing Team, it is the audience and adjudicators that you should be seeking to persuade.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Debating is the art of persuasion, and therefore persuasiveness is the paramount criterion for judging a Debate. There are three criteria which determine what makes a team persuasive:

1. Content

2. Strategy

3. Style

A score sheet is provided to assess the competitors' marks, but Adjudicators are urged to make notes on a separate sheet of paper during the Debate, before filling in the score sheets. In the final analysis, it is the overall impression of which Team has presented its case most convincingly that will determine the decision.

Adjudicators must be familiar with the Rules of the Debates and the Standing Orders. In addition, "The Glossary of Debating Terms and Tips" provides in depth information with which Adjudicators should be familiar.

1. CONTENT

Content comprises everything that a Team says in a Debate. It includes a brief definition of the Motion, arguments, evidence, Points of Information and rebuttal. Content should be judged by the way it establishes an argument. Adjudicators should reward Speakers who offer intelligent arguments, logically presented and supported by relevant examples.

Important elements of content include:

- Subject knowledge
- A clear analysis of the Motion
- Relevant and topical arguments, logically explained
- Evidence (facts, examples, statistics and expert opinion)
- Arguments and evidence presented in *rebuttal* of the other side's case.
- Points of Information (and responses to Points of Information)
- A fair definition (First Proposition Speaker only)

Relevance: Presentations should be relevant to the Motion and the definition of the Motion. Competitors should not avoid specific issues that need to be addressed.

Analysis: A Speaker should demonstrate an understanding of the larger issues, including the overall theme of the Debating Competition. All points should be tied to the Motion. Examples should be used to prove points. Presentations should not contain unsubstantiated assertions or logical flaws.

Evidence: Relevant examples and authorities are vital and their absence should be penalized. However, if any Adjudicator has expert knowledge in a particular field and sees a misuse of an example in a Speaker's case, the Speaker should not be penalized unless the opposition has highlighted the error.

Logic: Logic is the chain of reasoning used to prove an argument. The Speaker must state, explain and illustrate each of his or her arguments.

2. STRATEGY

Strategy covers how well a Team puts its arguments together and how well it uses the time allocated to make points effectively. Strategy should be judged at both the Team and the individual level.

Important areas of strategy include timing, and use of Points of Information.

Duties of the Speaker: Each Speaker has a role to fill, and Adjudicators must decide how well each person has carried out their specific responsibility. Questions to ask include:

- Did the First Proposition Speaker define the Motion clearly, and was it a fair definition?
- If the First Opposition Speaker challenged the Definition, was it a fair challenge?
- Did the First Opposition Speaker and both Second Speakers rebut previous arguments satisfactorily? Did they each offer arguments developing the case?
- Did the Summary Speakers recap the major issues of the Debate and offer good rebuttals of the other Team's case? N.B.: No new arguments must be introduced in the Summary.

Teamwork : Did the two Speakers work together well, and did their arguments complement each other? The first Speaker should lay out the basic case and some specific arguments, the second should develop the case further, and summary presentations should go over all the major issues that have been raised.

Rebuttal: This is the most demanding and interesting feature of a good Debate. After the first Proposition Speaker, each subsequent Speaker must spend some time addressing arguments raised by the other side. Adjudicators must decide whether the Speakers have achieved this goal. It is not enough for Speakers to address trivial arguments - they must deal with the major arguments offered by the other Team. A Speaker who undermines their opposition while consolidating their own defense should be rewarded.

Structure: A Team's argument should be logically ordered in a sequence that flows naturally from point to point. Each individual presentation should reflect the Team's overall case (a thematic approach is preferable to a collection of independent arguments). Presentations should be clearly structured, easy to follow, and should respond to the dynamics of the Debate. A well structured presentation will have:

- An interesting opening which captures the attention of the audience
- A clear statement of the purpose and general direction of the presentation
- A logical sequence of ideas which shows a clear development of the Speaker's argument
- A proportional allocation of time to the presentation as a whole, and to each major point.
- A conclusion or summary of the major points made in the presentation

Points of Information: Points of Information are questions or comments offered by an opposing Speaker during a presentation. Teams can use Points of Information strategically to throw a Speaker off track, to stump a presentation, or to undermine a point or argument offered by the Speaker. Points of Information can only be offered during non-protective times: any time between (but not including) the first and last minutes of a presentation. They cannot be offered during the Summary Presentations. A Point of Information must be stated in 15 seconds or less.

Speakers who do not offer, do not accept, or do not respond to Points of Information are not Debating and should not advance in the Debates.

In a seven minute presentation a Speaker should accept two or three Points of Information and must respond immediately. (However, they may respond by saying that they will deal with the point later in

their presentation) At the same time, Points of Information should be kept courteous and should not be offered so frequently as to become harassment.

Points of Information show Adjudicators that a Debater is an active participant in the Debate. Each Team member should offer at least two Points of Information. (1) External timing: Presentations should not exceed or fall short of the official time limits by very much, and (2) Internal timing: Speakers should devote an appropriate proportion of the presentation to each argument and point.

3. STYLE

Adjudicators are looking for Speakers who engage with the audience extremely well and are easy to follow and understand. Good public speaking skills include: use of gesture, fluency, audibility, variety of tone, and ability to relate to the audience, particularly via eye contact. Humour and gesture, while important, should not overwhelm. "Props" are not allowed. Reading presentations or reciting them from memory should be penalized. However, speakers can refer to brief notes during the course of the Debate to rebut the Opposition.

JUDGES MARKING SCHEME

- The score sheet gives each (8 and 7 minute) presentation a maximum of 10 marks for content, 20 marks for strategy, and 10 marks for style for a total of 40 points.
- Summary presentations receive a maximum of 5 marks for content, 10 marks for strategy, and 5 marks for style for a total of 20
- The Team total is therefore 100.

Penalties: Speakers have been advised that they will be penalized for a number of different things. Exactly how much they are penalized is up to the Adjudicators, as is the decision whether penalties for minor transgressions should outweigh the credit a persuasive Team may have amassed. In general:

- Minor timing problems, isolated occasions of discourteous humour, an over-weighted definition, the acceptance or offering of excessive Points of Information, limited new arguments in Summaries, or stylistic problems are not regarded as serious and should only be penalized by one or two points.
- Major timing problems (especially blatant refusal to obey time signals), the reading of scripted presentations, failure to offer, accept or respond to Points of Information, an overly truistic definition, or repeated abuse to opponents should, normally, result in the Speaker and his or her Team losing the Debate.

Adjudicators are not required to hand in score sheets at the end of Debates.

REACHING A DECISION

- At the beginning of the Debate the Adjudicators should choose a "Chief Adjudicator" who will deliver the results at the end of the Debates.
- After all of the Debates in the round are complete, the Adjudicators will consider their decisions.
- The score sheet allows each Adjudicator to allocate marks for each individual Speaker as well as for each Team. These marks should *reflect or guide your decision* rather than make it for you. Adjudicators are urged to make their decisions relatively quick.
- Adjudicators are asked to select one winner for each Debate.

- Adjudicators should note that this is a *Team* competition. A Team may include one very impressive Speaker and one who is less so, but unless the Team is clearly better than their competition, it is preferable to reward a better all-round Team effort.
- When announcing the decision, the Chief Adjudicator is asked to comment on the merits of each Debate. This advice is very valuable for less experienced Debaters. Adjudicators are also urged to take some time to talk privately to Teams after the Debate.
- When explaining your decision
 - Highlight critical differences between the two Teams
 - Be specific in weighing the relative merits of the cases and the important elements of the cases that were crucial in determining the verdict
 - Deliver criticism in constructive terms.

JUDGE'S SCORE SHEET

DEBATE MOTION: _____

PROPOSITION TEAM

SCHOOL: _____

FIRST PROPOSITION SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/10

Strategy: ____/20

Style: ____/10

TOTAL: ____/40

SECOND PROPOSITION SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/10

Strategy: ____/20

Style: ____/10

TOTAL: ____/40

PROPOSITION SUMMARY SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/5

Strategy: ____/10

Style: ____/5

TOTAL: ____/20

PROPOSITION TEAM TOTAL

Content: ____/25

Strategy: ____/50

Style: ____/25

TOTAL: ____/100

COMMENTS:

Note: *Points of Information should be reflected in your scores for Strategy.*

OPPOSITION TEAM

SCHOOL: _____

FIRST OPPOSITION SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/10

Strategy: ____/20

Style: ____/10

TOTAL: ____/40

SECOND OPPOSITION SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/10

Strategy: ____/20

Style: ____/10

TOTAL: ____/40

OPPOSITION SUMMARY SPEAKER

NAME: _____

Content: ____/5

Strategy: ____/10

Style: ____/5

TOTAL: ____/20

OPPOSITION TEAM TOTAL

Content: ____/25

Strategy: ____/50

Style: ____/25

TOTAL: ____/100

COMMENTS:

Note: *Points of Information should be reflected in your scores for Strategy.*

RULES

ENTRY RULES

Each school is eligible to enter **one** Team.

- Each Team shall consist of two Speakers and one substitute Speaker.
- Team members must be full-time students of the participating school.
- Speakers may not be substituted during a Debate.
- Two Teams of two persons each will participate in each Debate. One Team will be “For the Resolution” and the other Team “Against the Resolution”.

BEFORE THE DEBATES

- Make sure the room is set up correctly (*a diagram is provided*), and that the Order Papers have been distributed, especially to the Judges.
- Introduce yourself to the Debaters, the Judges and the Timekeeper. You will be introducing them to the audience, so make sure that you have written down the Speakers’ names in the order they will be speaking, noting especially which Speakers will be making the summary presentations.
- Ensure the Judges are comfortable with their ability to see and hear the Debate, and have been provided with scoring sheets.
- Ensure that the competitors are present and seated. The Proposition Team should sit on your right, the Opposition Team on your left.

DURING THE DEBATES

- Say “I call this House to order”. Then give a brief presentation of introduction which includes the following:
 - Welcome the Judges, the Audience, and the Debating Teams to the (Round/Regional Final/Area Final) of the Debating Competition 2016.
 - Thank the Sponsors and all those who have helped the round take place.
 - Direct everyone’s attention to the Standing Orders and rules printed on the back of the Order Paper.
 - Describe the format of the Debate including the timing requirements.

- Introduce the Judges and the Timekeeper.
- For each Debate, read the Motion and introduce the two Teams. Name their Schools and read the name of each Speaker. (Before you do this, ensure that the Judges and the Timekeeper are ready to begin).
- Then call on the Speakers in the following order, thanking them each as they finish: First Proposition, First Opposition, Second Proposition, and Second Opposition.
- After the fourth presentation (the Second Opposition) call on the Teams to make their summary presentations. Remember that the Opposition summary comes first. No Points of Information are allowed during these presentations.
- During debating rounds announce a ten-minute break between Debates (to allow for seating of the new Teams) and then move on into the next Debate, and follow the same pattern.

AFTER THE DEBATES

- When all the Debates are concluded, invite the Judges to convene to reach their verdicts. The Judges will advise the Chairman when they have decided the results.
- When the Judges are ready, call the House to order again and invite the Chief Judge to make comments on behalf of the panel and to announce the results.
- Finally, make a brief concluding presentation, congratulating the winners, thanking the Adjudicators and everyone else for coming, and the Sponsor.

GENERAL CHAIRING SKILLS

- The Chairman should ensure that Speakers keep to the time limits. Speakers should not be interrupted if they exceed the time limit by a few seconds, but if they continue speaking for more than thirty seconds after a double bell, ask them to stop immediately.
- If a Point of Information exceeds fifteen seconds you should intervene. You will be provided with a stopwatch to time Points of Information. All other timing is the responsibility of the Timekeeper.
- Please ensure that every speaker, including those offering Points of Information, stands to speak.
- You may need to remind the audience of the competitors of the courteous behaviour expected from them, for example when there is excessive talking. It is your job to ask them to be quiet.

- Competitors are allowed to speak quietly during the Debate but if a competitor is speaking loudly during an opponent's presentation, it is recommended that you pass them a note telling them to stop.
- The Chairman should intervene if the Speaker or any person present is conducting him or herself in an unseemly manner, or using personal abuse or offensive language.
- The Chairman may also warn and has the discretion to take action against any member of the House who acts in a discourteous manner, harasses the speaker holding the Floor, or obstructs the Debate in any way.
- If absolutely necessary the Chairman can ask that the clock be stopped while he or she intervenes. However, every effort should be made not to interrupt a Speaker.

The Standing Orders

- All Members of participating schools, members of the audience shall comprise members of the House.
- The proceedings of the House will be subject to the ruling and guidance of the Chairman. All Speakers shall address the Chair, using the formula "Mr. or Madam Chairman/Chairperson".
- The Chairman's decision on the procedural matters related to the Debates is final.
- All members of the House will act in a courteous manner during the Debate.
- All Speakers must stand while they hold the floor. Member offering Points of Information must also stand.
- Points of Information may be made during any the main presentations, by either Speaker on the Opposite Team. However, the first and last minutes of each presentation are "*protected time*" and points may not be offered then. Points of Information are not allowed during summary presentations.
- To offer a Point of Information, a Speaker must stand up and say, "*On a Point of Information*". The Speaker holding the Floor (i.e. giving the presentation) has the right to accept or decline the point. If it is declined, the Speaker offering the point must sit down at once. Points of Information must not exceed 15 seconds in length.
- Members of the Teams must refrain from interjections during the Debate.
- The use of Props is not permitted in a Debate.
- No amendment to the Motion is permitted. Teams must Debate the Motion as presented and interpret it as best they can.

The Debate is conducted as follows:

1. Chairman's Introduction
2. First Proposition Speaker 8 minutes
3. First Opposition Speaker 8 minutes
4. Second Proposition Speaker 7 minutes
5. Second Opposition Speaker 7 minutes
6. Proposition summary presentation 4 minutes *No Points of Information*
7. Opposition summary presentation 4 minutes *No Points of Information*

Order Paper

PRELIMINARY ROUND

DATE:

TIME:

VENUE:

MOTION:

DEBATE ONE:

Proposing:..... Opposing:.....
(name of school) (name of school)

.....
.....

DEBATE TWO:

Proposing:..... Opposing:.....
(name of school) (name of school)

.....
.....

DEBATE THREE:

Proposing:..... Opposing:.....
(name of school) (name of school)

.....
.....

ADJUDICATORS:

.....

* Summary

COTE DAY 2018 DEBATE

GLOSSARY OF DEBATING TERMS & TIPS

This glossary provides participants in the Debate with definitions of Terms and some basic tips on Debating techniques, including general conduct, strategy, and style. Please note that these are not rules, (except where clearly indicated).

ADJUDICATORS

The Adjudicators, are the three people who decide which Team will move on to the next Round. The three criteria which they will use to assess performance are: Content, Strategy and Style.

ARGUMENT/POSITION

Being able to construct reasoned arguments is the key to good Debating. Argumentation is the process of explaining why a point of view should be accepted. Your Team's *case* is built up of arguments and must demonstrate logical reasoning. Avoid general statements unsupported by evidence. Support your argument with evidence. It is essential that your argument is relevant to the subject of the Debate.

An argument is supported by logic and evidence which prove its validity. One tool which you can use to develop an argument is the "A-R-E" method: **A**ssertion - **R**easoning - **E**vidence:

Assertion: State the argument/position

Reasoning: Use logical reasoning to show why the argument is true.

Evidence: Present relevant evidence to back up the argument.

Aspects that Judges look for in a good argument are:

Clarity: Your argument should be easy to understand.

Organization: Your argument should be well structured.

Consistency: You must not contradict yourself or your Teammates.

Relevance: Your argument must be relevant to the motion and the definition of the Motion. The points you make in support of your argument must also be linked to the Motion.

Logic: Logic is the chain of reasoning used to prove an argument. Do not make unsubstantiated assertions. You should state, explain and illustrate each of your arguments.

Effective use of evidence: Use evidence to back up your argument and show how each piece of evidence is relevant. Evidence can include facts, examples, statistics, and references to expert opinion.

CASE

All of the different arguments you make add up to your Case.

CHAIRMAN

The Chairman is the person who supervises the Sessions. The Chairman has absolute control over all procedural aspects of a Debate, and his or her decision on these matters is final. Procedural rules of the Debate are outlined in the *Standing Orders*.

CONDUCT

- You are allowed to speak during a Debate when:
 - ❖ You “have the floor”, i.e. you are making your presentation, and;
 - ❖ When you “rise to a Point of Information”.
- You can also speak *very quietly* with your Teammate while another Speaker has the floor or pass notes. However, you must not be heard, or distract the Speaker.
- You must stand when you are speaking. A Speaker is required to move forward to face the audience, recognize the Chairman, and then address the audience. Do not address your presentation to the opposing Team – remember, your goal is to persuade the audience and the Adjudicators.
- You must not address anyone personally. Refer to a member of the other Team as "the Speaker", "the honorable delegate from....", or "my fellow delegate" instead of using his or her name. Refer to your Team-mate as “my colleague”. Always refer to the Chairman as Mr. or Madam Chairman/Chairperson.
- When you pose a Point of Information you should state it in the form of a question. Start with a phrase like: "Would the Speaker not agree with me that..." or "Is the Honorable delegate aware that..." Remember that you can only offer one Point of Information at a time, and that you are not allowed to "answer back", even if you are unhappy with the answer to your Point of Information. When you have received a response to a Point of Information you should say "thank you" and sit down.

CONTENT

Content comprises everything that your Team says in a Debate. It includes a brief definition of the Motion, your Arguments, your Evidence, your Points of Information, and your rebuttal of the other side. All content must be relevant to the subject of the Debate. Important elements of content include:

- Subject knowledge
- A clear analysis of the Motion
- Relevant and topical arguments, logically explained
- Evidence (facts, examples, statistics and expert opinion)
- Arguments and evidence presented in *rebuttal* of the other side’s case
- Points of Information (and responses to Points of Information)

- A fair definition (First Proposition Speakers only)

DEBATE

To Debate is “to discuss an issue by considering opposed arguments”, or “to consider a matter from different viewpoints”.

A Debate is an organized argument which involves an analysis of issues and ideas. It centers around a Motion (sometimes called a Resolution), and involves two sides, one which supports the Motion and one which opposes it. A Debate is conducted as follows:

- ❖ Chairman's Introduction
- ❖ First Proposition Speaker 8 minutes
- ❖ First Opposition Speaker 8 minutes
- ❖ Second Proposition Speaker 7 minutes
- ❖ Second Opposition Speaker 7 minutes
- ❖ Proposition summary presentation 3 minutes
- ❖ Opposition summary presentation 3 minutes *No Points of Information*

DEFINING THE MOTION

Defining the Motion is the first task of the First Speaker of the Proposition Team. The ‘definition’ clarifies the Motion and is intended to tell the Audience, Adjudicators and Opposition Team exactly what the Debate will be about. It gives a clear description of boundaries to the Motion, thereby limiting the Debate to a focused area of discussion.

This prevents the Debate from turning into a vague and confusing series of unrelated arguments and different interpretations from both Teams of what is actually being debated between them.

Defining Words: The definition should take the Motion as a whole. You should define individual words or phrases only if they have a key role. Keep in mind that the definition should not be a lengthy recitation of dictionary quotations but rather a logical and concise enunciation which gives a clear understanding of the issues that will be discussed in the Debate.

Reasonable Definitions: The definition should be a clear and simple line of argument which addresses the Motion fully and creates a fair ground for Debate. The Judges will expect a relevant, intelligent, straightforward and reasonable definition, which:

- Has a clear and logical link to the Motion - this means that an average reasonable person would accept the link made by between the Motion and the definition.
- Is debatable (i.e. there are two sides to it). A reasonable Opposition to the definition must exist, and specialist knowledge should not be required to understand and argue it.

- Is not a self-proving (tautological) or a truistic assertion.

DEFINITION CHALLENGE

The Opposition should accept any definition by the Proposition unless it presents an unreasonable or clearly irrelevant interpretation of the Motion. This means the Team must be prepared to be flexible since it may need to respond to an unusual or unexpected definition. The Opposition can legitimately challenge a definition which:

- Is a **tautology**: A tautological case is one that is immediately and logically true by construction. In other words the definition is given in such a way that it is logically impossible to negate it. For example, a definition which says, "President Robinson is the best president since 2000" would be a tautology, since he is the *only* person to have attained the presidency in the specified time period.
- Is **truistic**: These are definitions which are 'true' by nature and thus make the proposed arguments unarguable and therefore unreasonable in the context of the Debate. If a Team defines the Debate truistically, they seek to win the Debate by the truth of their definition rather than by the strength of their arguments and supporting evidence.
- Constitutes **Squirreling**: Offering a definition that does not have a proper logical link to the Motion is called 'squirreling'. Squirreling is probably the most popular reason for a definitional challenge Debate.
- Is **"time set"** unfairly. The Debate must take place in the present. The definition cannot set the Debate in the past or the future.
- Is **"place set"** unfairly. The definition cannot restrict the Debate so narrowly to a particular geographical or political location that participants in the Debate could not reasonably be expected to have knowledge of the place.

Challenging a definition: The Opposition cannot raise a challenge simply because its own definition seems more reasonable. Be very careful about challenging definitions - only do so if you are absolutely certain that you can justify the challenge based on the above conditions. **If the Opposition accepts the definition, the First Opposition Speaker can simply say so.** If the Opposition decides to challenge the definition, the First Opposition Speaker must:

- State explicitly that the Opposition Team is challenging the definition.
- Justify that challenge with one of the conditions, i.e. prove that the Definition is irrelevant, truistic, tautological, squirreling, or Time or Place setting.
- Provide an alternative definition of the Motion (which must also be reasonable),.
- Then negate the alternative definition in their case, i.e. the Opposition must then go on to disprove the new definition!

The Proposition *cannot* accept the alternative definition provided by the Opposition and must defend its original definition and stick to their case. The result will be two Teams carrying out very different Debates. A definitional challenge Debate is difficult, and confusing or even meaningless to the audience.

Both sides are advised not to turn the Debate into a 'Definitional Debate'. The best Debates involve an interesting and fair proposition put forward which the First Opposition Speaker accepts.

FLOOR

The room in which the Debate takes place is referred to as the floor. A Speaker 'has the floor' when he or she is speaking.

HOUSE

The House is the Term used to describe everyone in the room at the time of the Debate, including the Debaters, the Judges, the Timekeeper and the Audience.

LISTENING

While another Speaker has the floor, you may use the time to further prepare your own case, but you should also listen attentively to the presentation, so that you can rebut the other side's case, argue effectively, and generally respond to the dynamics of the Debate.

- If you do not listen, you may incorrectly reiterate the other side's arguments – this is called *misrepresentation* and is considered a major error in Debating, since Debating is about opposing what the other side has actually said, not what you thought they said.
- When the other side is speaking you may have a quiet discussion with your Team Mate. However, you must not disturb the Speaker who has the floor. Heckling the other Team will incur penalty points.

LOGICAL FALLACIES

Logic is the chain of reasoning used to prove an argument. A logical fallacy is an error in logic. Understanding logical fallacies will help you (1) Evaluate your own arguments before presenting them in a Debate, and (2) Assess and rebut the arguments of the other side during a Debate. The following is a brief introduction to different types of logical fallacies.

- **Appeal to Numbers:** Attempts to argue that something is true by showing that many people think that it is true. However, the fact that many people believe something does not necessarily make it true or right.
- **Argument to Ignorance:** Assumes that something is true simply because it hasn't been proven false, or that, because something has not been proven to be true, it is false. For example, someone might argue that global warming is occurring because no one has shown that it is not. But failing to prove that the global warming theory is false is not the same as proving it is true.
- **Argument to Tradition or Antiquity:** Says a policy or practice is right because "it has always been done that way."

- **Attacking the Person:** May take the form of an attack on the character or motives of a person who has stated an idea, rather than the idea itself. The real issue is not who makes the argument, but whether the argument itself is valid.
- **Begging the Question:** Also called assuming the answer. It is the fallacy of assuming, when trying to prove something, the very thing you are trying prove.
- **Causal Fallacies:** Mistake correlation for causation and fail to recognize that there can be a correlation between two phenomena without one causing the other. Causal Fallacies include:
 - ❖ **“After this, therefore because of this”:** Because one thing follows another, it is held to cause the other (A has caused B, simply because A happened prior to B)
 - ❖ **“With this, therefore because of this”:** Assumes that, because two things occur simultaneously, one must be a cause of the other, when in fact the two things may be the joint effects of another underlying cause.
- **Circular Argument:** An argument that states that ‘X is true because X is true’ without saying why X is true.
- **False Analogy:** The two objects or events being compared are dissimilar (e.g. you may be familiar with the phrase ‘comparing apples and oranges’).
- **False Dichotomy:** Considers only the extremes in a continuum of possibilities. A false dichotomy argues that a course of action will result in one of two diametrically opposed outcomes, and that no other outcomes are possible, when in reality there are more options. For example, "Either you love your country or you hate it." (also called a False Dilemma).
- **Non Sequitur:** Latin for "It does not follow" and is essentially the result of a missing step in an argument. A non sequitur occurs when you try to construct a chain of causation (A leads to B leads to C, etc.) without justifying each step in the chain. For example, to state: "Racism is wrong. Therefore, we need affirmative action," is a non sequitur. A logical argument would try to fill in the missing step like this: "Racism is wrong. Affirmative action would reduce racism. Therefore, we need affirmative action."
- **Red Herring:** An irrelevant fact or argument which distracts from the question at hand. For example, "The Opposition claims that welfare dependency leads to higher crime rates - but how are poor people supposed to keep a roof over their heads without our help?" It is perfectly valid to ask this question as part of the broader Debate, but to pose it as a response to the argument about welfare leading to crime is fallacious.
- **Slippery Slope:** The fallacy of arguing that one action will lead to a series of other, increasingly unacceptable, events or consequences, without proving a causal connection between the first action and the consequent events. It is a form of non sequitur, because no reason has been provided to show why one thing leads to another.
- **Straw Man:** Attacks an argument that is different from the other side’s argument. This can be done in two ways: by attacking a weaker form of the other person’s argument, or by attacking an extreme version of somebody's argument, instead of the actual argument they've made. It usually involves putting words into an opponent’s mouth. One example of this would be to say, "Mr. Jones thinks that capitalism is good because everybody earns whatever wealth they have, but this is clearly false because many people just inherit their fortunes,"

when in fact Mr. Jones had not made the "earnings" argument and had instead argued, that capitalism gives most people an incentive to work.

- **You Too:** Defends an error in one's reasoning by pointing out that one's opponent has made the same error. However, an error is still an error, regardless of how many people make it. For example, "They accuse us of making unjustified assertions, but they asserted a lot of things, too!"

THE MOTION

The Motion is the subject (or topic) of the Debate.

OPPOSITION

The Opposition is the Team of Speakers that opposes the Motion. Their task is to argue against (or negate) the Motion, and to counter the Proposer's case. The job of the Opposition is to refute the Motion.

POINTS OF INFORMATION

Accepting and offering Points of Information demonstrates your Debating skills and knowledge of the topic. Points of Information can decide the outcome of a Debate. Speakers who do not offer, do not accept, or do not respond to Points of Information are not debating effectively and could lose vital strategy marks.

We recommend up to two (2) Points of Information per Team Member.

Points of Information may be made during a main seven-minute presentation, by either Speaker of the Opposing Team. The first and last minutes of a main presentation are known as "*protected time*" and Points of Information may not be offered then, nor are they allowed during the four-minute summary presentations. **The clock is not stopped while points are delivered.**

The Debater holding the floor will respond, if he/she chooses to accept the Point of Information. If the Debater accepts, the Debater posing the Point of Information has 15 seconds to deliver that Point. If the Debater does not accept the Point, the other side must be seated immediately. Note that making and accepting a relevant Point of Information shows that you are engaging in Debate. The Judges will note.

- **Responding to Points of Information:** There are a number of ways to deal with a Point of Information. You can dismiss it briefly and then carry on with rest of your presentation, you can answer it fully and then carry on with the rest of your presentation, or you can say that you will deal with the point later on in your presentation and carry on with your presentation (if you do this remember to note the point of information when you refute it later on).
- **When to take Points of Information:** It is usually not wise to take a point very early in a presentation or when you are just beginning to establish an argument. You should however, take one or two points during your presentation. Taking more points usually leaves too little time to finish your material and taking no points implies you are reluctant to engage the other side.
- **Offering Points of Information:** When offering a Point of Information, you must stand up, address the Chairman, and say "On a Point of Information...", then wait. The Speaker

holding the floor will say either “accepted” or “rejected”. If your point is rejected, sit down again. If it is accepted, remain standing and make one point in *no longer than 15 seconds*.

Your point must be relevant to what the Speaker is *currently* talking about. In your Point of Information you can:

- Offer a fact that disproves what your opponent is saying.
- Point out a contradiction in the Speaker’s argument.
- Ask for further information.

If you try to make a point in protected time, the Chairman will rule you "out of order".

PREPARATION

Your Team should research and prepare its case together. Some Teams begin by discussing the Motion in a “brainstorming” session, where each member offers ideas about possible arguments, evidence, examples, and counter arguments. During the session, you can discuss an appropriate *Team Line* for your case. Then make a list of your arguments, and possible counter-arguments.

Next, try thinking like your opponents. Ask yourself how you would Debate the other side of the Motion and make sure you have answers to your opponent’s arguments. Make a list of the other Team’s possible arguments and counter-arguments, so that when your opponents bring up those arguments, you can quickly make a Point of Information or work the reply into your presentations.

When you have decided on your overall case, Team line, arguments and evidence, have a strategy session in which you decide the *Team Split*. Then each Team member must spend some time preparing or her own presentation! Hold several dress rehearsals to perfect your presentation.

PROPOSITION

The Proposition is the Team of Speakers in a Debate which argues “for” the Motion. They seek to persuade the audience that the Motion is correct by providing information and arguments that support the Motion. The Proposer “advocates” the Motion.

REBUTTAL

Rebuttal involves dissecting the opposing side's argument apart and exposing its weak points. You do not have to rebut every fact or point offered by your opponents but you *should* rebut their key arguments. Adjudicators will reward Speakers who can identify the main arguments in an opponent’s case and undermine them. Relevant arguments which are not rebutted are taken as having been conceded.

An assertion is not a rebuttal – you must show how and why the other Team’s arguments are invalid, and point out where contradiction, errors or logical flaws lie. You can offer rebuttal by showing that the other side’s argument:

- Is based on an error of fact or an erroneous interpretation of fact.
- Is irrelevant to the motion.
- Involves some form of *logical fallacy*.
- May be true, but involves unacceptable implications.
- Contradicts their own arguments.
- May be true, but is not very important.

There are different ways to fit rebuttal into your presentation. You can begin your presentation by rebutting all of the major points raised by the other side, and then go on to your own arguments, or you can tackle your opponent's arguments one by one in different sections of your presentation.

RESEARCH

Research your Motion as a Team. Look for facts, examples and statistics that support your arguments. Also look for little-known information that might reinforce your case and/or undermine your opponent's argument. Be particularly aware of current affairs.

Your information should back up your argument and be memorable. If you find a little-known fact that will surprise the audience and catch their attention, use it strategically. However, always remember that your argument is the most important part of your presentation - your research is meant to reinforce your argument.

Good sources of information include your school's library, the public library, newspapers, magazines, and the internet (your public library may offer free internet access). Also, identify organizations and individuals who have special knowledge about the topic you are Debating and approach them for guidance and information.

Judges will use three criteria to assess your performance and that of your Team in a Debate: **Content, Strategy and Style.**