

# A BASIC GUIDE TO DEBATING

## WHAT IS A DEBATE?

- a. A debate is an argument between two opposing sides.
- b. It is not to be six prepared or individual speeches.
- c. The topic and time limits will be given
- d. The two sides are called:

*affirmative:* In favour of the nominated topic

*negative:* Against the nominated topic

## ARGUMENT:

Both teams must put forward their side of the topic substantiation.

## REBUTTAL:

It is equally important to introduce rebuttal - that is, to state why the opposition's argument is wrong.

## ORDER OF SPEECHES:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative
2. 1<sup>st</sup> Negative
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative
4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative
5. 3<sup>rd</sup> Affirmative
6. 3<sup>rd</sup> Negative

## PREPARATION:

It is important for the three team members to get together at least two or three times before a debate. You cannot effectively operate as a team unless this is done.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING A DEBATE

1. Organise at least two or three meetings with your team.
2. Talk about the topic generally at first.
3. Establish your general interpretation of the topic.
4. Establish your order of speaking. Go away from your first meeting with your definition and a rough outline.
5. RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC - all three members should research. Material can be obtained from many sources:

- a. Your own mind - it is amazing what information is stored there, so use it! Write down as many thoughts as you can on the topic.
- b. Various newspapers
- c. Magazines.
- d. Books
- e. Encyclopaedias
- f. Government Departments.
- g. The Internet.

6. List 7 or 8 points to support your argument.
7. Select the strongest 3 to 4 points and expand on these to build your argument.
8. SUBSTANTIATE your argument as much as possible with quotes, references, publications, visual aids and examples. REMEMBER - a few well chosen examples carries more weight than a generalised comment.
9. During your second meeting, determine the material your speakers are going to deliver.
10. REMEMBER - *the third speaker of the Negative team is the only person THAT MAY NOT introduce new material.*

### DEFINITION:

First of all you have to determine your definition of the topic. This is normally a dictionary definition. This should then define what is generally accepted and reasonably understood as the meaning of the topic.

## CHECK YOUR DEFINITION WITH THE FOLLOWING:

- a. Are there any key words or phrases in the topic?
- b. Are precise meanings involved?
- c. Is tense important?
- d. Is degree involved?
- e. Is a comparison involved?
- f. Is your definition too broad or too narrow?
- g. What does the topic mean to you in general?

## IN SCHOOL DEBATING:

It is usually advisable to confine interpretation of the topic to what is generally accepted and reasonably understood.

## TEAM LINE:

The Team Line answers the question - Why? (for the affirmative) or - Why Not? (for the negative) about the subject. It should be a short, general statement that gives the main idea of the team's approach to the subject. It should be stated clearly by all speakers and remain consistent throughout the debate.

## DUTIES OF THE SPEAKER

➤ 1<sup>st</sup> AFFIRMATIVE

It is your job to begin the debate. It should be the *only totally prepared* speech of the six debaters.

## OPENING:

You should tell us what the debate is about, that is, your team's definition or interpretation of the topic. Try to capture the attention of the audience from the start. If you can do it effectively, try something unusual or different from the normal - "the topic for tonight's debate is ...."

## INTRODUCE YOUR TEAM:

*Give an outline* of how your team is going to tackle your side of the argument.

For example:

A. "I, as 1<sup>st</sup> speaker, will talk on the aspects of .....

B. "Our 2<sup>nd</sup> speaker ... will continue our argument, summarise our team's case and rebut the argument put forward by the opposition."

*Definitions* based on a dictionary meaning are acceptable - or it can be what is generally accepted as the meaning of the topic. DO NOT get bogged down in *semantics* i.e. *debating definitions*.

*Give your Arguments* - present each argument in order, giving examples etc. to substantiate your argument.

*Summary* - in your brief summary leave the audience with the main points of your team's case. END ON A POSITIVE NOTE.

LENGTH OF DEFINITION:

- should be kept reasonably short. We don't want the 1<sup>st</sup> speaker in each team wasting valuable debating time with a lengthy definition.

THE ABSTRACT INTERPRETATION:

- is best avoided unless the topic obviously suggests otherwise. This is so because it makes substantiation of your argument that much more difficult.

SPEAK TO THE TOPIC:

- remember always to confine your argument to the topic. Debaters will lose marks if they talk around the subject but not directly relate to it - even if it does sound convincing.

OPENING AND CLOSING:

- in your opening only refer to the chairperson and audience. NEVER acknowledge the time-keeper, adjudicators or fellow debaters. At the end of the speech never say *thank you*.

➤ 1<sup>st</sup> NEGATIVE

The duties of the 1<sup>st</sup> Negative are exactly the same as for the 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative. Refer to the notes on the 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative

The only difference is that the 1<sup>st</sup> Negative has the opportunity to rebut the 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative. If you can rebut effectively, some of the arguments of the 1<sup>st</sup> affirmative, then this will provide you with a very effective opening to your speech.

REMEMBER. - ineffective rebuttal is useless.

*Effective Rebuttal* would be: "The 1<sup>st</sup> speaker for the affirmative team said ..... This is wrong or incorrect because ....." "

➤ 2<sup>nd</sup> AFFIRMATIVE

Rebut the basic arguments of the 1<sup>st</sup> Negative. *Rebut*, if possible, the rebuttal put forward by the 1<sup>st</sup> negative of the 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative speaker, if you consider their rebuttal effective.

*Argument* - your argument or material is very important. Outline what you are going to do. eg. "I as 2<sup>nd</sup> speaker will continue our team's argument on the aspects of ....." Then elaborate on these points with SUBSTANTIATION.

*Summary* - to conclude, tell the audience once again of the main points of your team's case that you have put forward.

➤ 2<sup>nd</sup> NEGATIVE

The duties of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative are exactly the same as that for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative. Refer to the notes above.

➤ 3<sup>rd</sup> AFFIRMATIVE

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Affirmative should listen carefully to your own team as well as the opposition. It is up to you to patch up any mistakes or blemishes made by your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> speakers, if any. If you have to do this, don't apologise - just reiterate in a clear manner what they should have said. This can be done in your summary of your team's case.

**I suggest you begin with rebuttal.**

*Remember* - to have effective rebuttal, you must say why their argument or a particular point is wrong. Attack as many points as possible.

*Effective rebuttal* - of several individual points made by the opposition is far more beneficial than just a generalised rebuttal without substantiation.

*Your Argument* - you may not introduce new material.

*Your Summary* - you must summarise your team's case. This means repeating and emphasising the best points put forward by your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Speakers. You can prepare this portion of your speech at your team's final meeting before the debate.

**FINISH ON A POSITIVE NOTE.**

➤ 3<sup>rd</sup> NEGATIVE

The duties of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Negative are exactly the same as that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Affirmative. Refer to the notes above.

The only difference is that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Negative **MUST NOT** introduce new material.

Each speaker should clearly state his/her arguments, explain his/her reasoning, elaborate on the implications of the argument and illustrate it with clear examples.

<p>THE FIRST AFFIRMATIVE is concerned with definition, development of basic theme or 'line', allocation of aspects of his team's case to himself and his second speaker (not usually to his third), argument in support of his own aspect and a summary of what he has said.</p>	<p>THE FIRST NEGATIVE must accept or amend the Affirmative's definition, show why the Affirmative's line is unacceptable, substitute a basic negative line for it, and then proceed with the allocation of aspects of his team's case to himself and his second speaker, argue in support of his own aspect and summarise what he has said.</p>
<p>THE SECOND AFFIRMATIVE should he fail to recapture the initiative from the negative, will make his team's task more difficult. He must refute the basic negative case, which the Affirmative is hearing for the first time, before developing and summarising his/her own.</p>	<p>THE SECOND NEGATIVE should spend more time refuting his opposite number's particular arguments than attacking the case, for the latter task should have been carried out by his first speaker. But he must reinforce the basic negative line and recapture the initiative, before developing his argument.</p>
<p>THE THIRD AFFIRMATIVE must discharge his duty with precision in view of the fact that the other team will have the final say. Rarely can he/she afford to develop his/her team's case any further. (S)he must review both team's cases and contrast them to his/her own advantage. A mixture of general and detailed rebuttal should lead to a final summary.</p>	<p>THE THIRD NEGATIVE is not allowed to introduce new material except briefly by way of refutation but even then it should not invite reply which can no longer be given. He must review both teams' cases and contrast them to his own advantage. A mixture of general and detailed rebuttal should lead to a final summary.</p>

**REMEMBER** - Notes should be mere headings - do not talk to other team members or the adjudicator. Convince the audience - look around the audience - speak slowly, use many examples - keep relating your examples to the topic - always conclude - listen to what the other team is saying and think of counter arguments - do not talk when others are speaking.

## ADJUDICATION

### FUNCTION OF THE SPEAKERS

AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
1 Define subject - show team's interpretation - outline team's case - make some points - summary.	1. Accept, modify, reject definition - outline team's case - dispute points A1 - make some points - conclude.
2. Introduction referring to definitions given - affirm team's case - detailed analysis with many examples - cover most of main points - argue against N 1 - peroration.	2. Introduction - refute A1 and A2 detail by detail - reaffirm definition - detailed analysis - cover most of main arguments - peroration.
3. Introduction - strongly attack N1 and N2 - develop further points of A1 and A2 - some minor new material - compare and contrast two teams' cases - major summary.	3. Introduction - strongly attack A 1, A2 and A3 - no new material - summarise N1 and N2 - compare and contrast two cases - major summary.

## SCORING

- MATTER [40] - Definition, Reasoning, Knowledge of Topic, Relevance, Facts and examples, Quotations, Interpretation.
- MANNER [40] - Voice, Gesture, Language, Personality, Persuasive ability.
- METHOD [20] - Logical speech, Sensible arguments, Team work, Attack of other side.



SPEAKER	AFFIRMATIVE			NEGATIVE		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
MATTER (40)						
MANNER (40)						
METHOD (20)						
SPEAKER'S TOTAL (100)						
TEAM TOTAL (300)						

WINNING TEAM: \_\_\_\_\_

ADJUDICATOR'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL COMMENTS:

## CHAIRPERSON'S FORM

I welcome you to the \_\_\_\_\_ round of the \_\_\_\_\_ Debating Competition.

This debate is between \_\_\_\_\_ High School and \_\_\_\_\_ High School.

The Affirmative team, from \_\_\_\_\_ High School is:

1<sup>ST</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>ND</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>RD</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

Team Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

The Negative team, from \_\_\_\_\_ High School is:

1<sup>ST</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>ND</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>RD</sup> Speaker \_\_\_\_\_

Team Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

The Adjudicator for this debate is \_\_\_\_\_

Each speaker may speak for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes. There will be a warning bell at \_\_\_\_\_ minutes with two bells at \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to indicate that the speaker's time has expired. A bell will be rung continuously if a speaker exceeds the maximum time by more than one minute.

The subject for this debate is THAT \_\_\_\_\_

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Affirmative speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will begin the debate.

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Negative Speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will begin their case.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will continue their case.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will continue their case.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Affirmative Speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will conclude their case.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Negative Speaker, \_\_\_\_\_ will conclude the debate.

The Adjudicator, \_\_\_\_\_ will now deliver the adjudication and announce the result of this debate.

A member of the losing team will now congratulate the winners, a member of the winning team will now respond.

## PRESENTATION

Everyone has their own personality and style when it comes to debating. Some very convincing debaters have very subdued, but forceful styles

You don't have to be outgoing, in fact, too dramatic is off-putting.

It's helpful to keep the following in mind:-

1. Develop eye contact with the audience
2. Use your hands and body naturally to emphasise points
3. Speak clearly
4. Vary your voice pitch and modulation
5. Don't speak too quickly

### **Hints**

1. Don't write your debate in full – make headings and notes on your cue cards.
2. Number each card
3. Avoid slang – use good conversational English.
4. Open and close your speech with a device such as a joke, illustration, or quote.

### **How to speak**

Speaking and talking are different things. When we talk we are often interrupted, but when we debate, we are able to speak uninterrupted.

This can be difficult. We may feel uncomfortable at being the centre of attention and so our anxiety becomes heightened. As a result, we may:-

1. speak too quickly
2. speak too softly
3. have poor diction (too nervous, lockjaw sets in)
4. monotonous

All of the above plus others can be overcome. Firstly, take pleasure in the fact that you now have a chance to air your views, uninterrupted for a few minutes. The audience is there because they want to hear what you have to say. Don't disappoint them. Secondly, remember that you can discard the Negative inside messages and develop a balanced view about yourself and your self worth and self esteem.

## Types of speakers

Those who speak from the mouth have given little thought or preparation to their work – they like the sound of their own voice.

Those who speak from the head have lots of facts and figures but are very boring and dry.

Those who speak from the heart are very emotional. Some of the great orators spoke from the heart.

What we need to do in debating is find a balance between the three. Which one are you? How do you need to balance your presentation?



## Speaking

A number of things make up how we sound to other people when we speak. These are some of those elements that make up our speech:-

Tone  
Volume  
Rhythm and cadence  
Pitch  
Modulation

When debating you need to slightly exaggerate these, more so than if you were just speaking to a friend. Record your voice so that you can hear how it sounds and the adjustments you need to make.

### Points to remember

Speak clearly and slowly, give time for your words to sink in, especially after a question. Pauses can be very effective.

Modulate your voice so that it has an up and down sound about it.

Feel confident about what you are saying and you'll avoid 'ums', 'errs' and the like.

Use verbal emphasis, e.g. "No" can be said in a number of ways, loud or soft, to catch people's attention.

## Body language

How you stand and move your head, eyes and hands, will help to convey your message in a very powerful way. Stand tall, shoulders back. You'll look and feel confident. When you pause, look at the audience. Maintain good eye contact by looking at individuals within the audience (this also gives you feedback – are they going to sleep? Do you need to speak with more emotion? They look puzzled. Are you speaking too quickly or softly?)

Large hand gestures are good. Think of yourself as larger than life. There may be some distance between yourself and the audience, small gestures may be lost.

Here are some things to avoid:-

1. Shifting your weight from foot to foot repeatedly. It's a nervous reaction which is then conveyed to the audience.
2. Keep reading your notes. When your head is bowed it's hard to hear, and you lose eye contact with the audience.
3. Shuffling your notes. This may make you look nervous and is distracting.
4. Personal Peccadilloes (e.g. twirling hair, pulling on ear). This is **very distracting**.



## STRUCTURE

Structure is comprised of the following two things:-

**1. Individual speaker form**

How the speech was constructed. Was it easy to follow? Was it in a logical sequence, and ordered? Did it follow an organised plan with a good introduction and conclusion?

**2. Team plan**

Did the speaker (as in the case of the First Affirmative and Negative) introduce the remaining speakers and what they were going to do? Did s/he refer to the team outline and plan, e.g. "as our first speaker said ..."

Points may be deducted if a speaker does not perform the tasks expected of him/her.

Debates are not three individual speeches.

Each team has a case, an outline and a theme.

All speakers need to link into their own speakers, and not contradict each other. They must vigorously defend the case, and rebut (except the first Affirmative speaker) the other side.



Each speaker should clearly *state* his/her arguments, *explain* his/her reasoning, *elaborate* on the implications of the argument and *illustrate* it with clear examples.

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### Five Commandments of *Audience* Responsibility

1. Thou shalt not talk while speaker is addressing class
2. Thou shalt not distract any speaker whilst debate is taking place
3. Thou will sustain appropriate body language ie. Sit up, look at speaker, be attentive
4. Thou shalt not address their own work whilst a debate is taking place
5. Thou shalt be respectful to ALL present inc. teacher, speakers and fellow audience members

### Five Commandments of *Debater* Responsibility

1. Thou shalt not exceed 4 minutes per speaker (warning provided at 3mins)
2. Thou shall present a logical and sustained argument using language and gesture appropriate to the classroom environment.
3. Thou will only address the key question and not extend the debate in personal realms
4. Thou shalt not 'wing' the debate and must show evidence of planning, preparation and teamwork
5. Thou shalt be respectful to ALL present inc. teacher, speakers and fellow audience members

### Five Commandments of *Adjudicator* Responsibility

1. Thou shall remain impartial. No bias is welcome
2. Thou shall provide constructive feedback that addresses the debate and not extend the debate in personal realms
3. Thou shall provide key comments to the debaters at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way
4. Thou shalt not display an apathetic approach to their task as adjudicators
5. Thou shalt be respectful to ALL present inc. teacher, speakers and fellow audience members



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**Manner 40** - Voice, Gesture, Language, Personality, Persuasive ability.

**Method 20** - Logical speech, Sensible arguments, Team work, Attack of other side.

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ADJUDICATOR'S SIGNATURE: .....

GENERAL COMMENTS:

