**How to becoming a debating champion!!**

**What is a debate?**

**Debate is contention in argument; dispute, controversy, discussion; esp. the discussion of questions of public interest in Parliament or in any assembly.[[1]](#endnote-1)**

So a debate is basically an argument!! That said it is **NOT, I repeat NOT,** an undisciplined shouting match between parties that passionately believe in a particular point of view. In fact quite the opposite is true. Debating has strict rules of conduct and quite sophisticated arguing techniques. Remember you will sometimes be asked to argue a position that is opposite of what you believe in!! Sound hard, remember all you budding lawyers, everyone is entitled to a defense in court and everyone should have representation.

**The topic of a debate.**

* All debates have a subject of discussion. This is called the **TOPIC** and the topic changes from debate to debate.
* They are often about current issues of public importance **(this house believes that the internet does more good than harm**) or about general philosophies or ideas **("This house believes that homework should be banned").**
* All topics begin with the word **"That".**
* The team that agrees with the topic is called the **AFFIRMATIVE** (or the `government' in parliamentary debating)
* The team that disagrees with the topic is called the **NEGATIVE** (or the `opposition' in parliamentary debating).

**The opening Argument.**

Each of the first four speakers in a debate will have an initial period of **‘protected time’** during which they can introduce themselves and their speech and get started on their arguments without interruption from the opposition team. The opposition will also have time to present points in favour of their case. This will then be followed by a period of free debate.

**The rebuttal**

After presenting their cases both teams will spend some time criticizing the arguments presented by the other team. This is called rebuttal. To say that the other side is wrong is not enough. You have to show why the other side is wrong. **Do not criticize the individual speakers, critize what they say. Never make any personal comments.**

**Point of information**

Points of Information are a vital element of a debate. After the protected period has elapsed any member of the opposing team can offer a Point of Information. Traditionally they can do this in the following ways: ***Stand, hand on head and say ‘Point of Information’ \*\*\*\*\*Stand, hand outstretched and say ‘On that point’ \*\*\*\*\*Stand, holding papers over head and say ‘Point of information’\*\*\*\*\*Stand, hand outstretched and say nothing.***

Remember a point of information cannot last more than 15 seconds!!

**TOP TIPS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **MATTER**  Matter is what you say, it is the substance of your speech. | **METHOD**  Method is how you organize what you say. | **MANNER**  Manner is how you present what you say. |
| Divide your matter into arguments and examples.  An argument is a statement of fact.  An example is a piece of evidence which supports an argument.  Any examples that you use should be *relevant* to the topic at hand. Examples which have very little or nothing to do with the topic only make a speech look weak and lacking substance.  Be informed – always read always be aware of current affairs. | **BE A TEAM.** Be aware of what the other speakers have said and what the team line is. Be consistent with what has already been said and what will be said by the other members of their team.  **AS AN INDIVIDUAL***.* You must structure your own speech well. Have a clear idea of your own arguments and which examples you will use.  Rebuttal should be organized. Attack each argument that the opposition presents in turn.  Watch your time. Do not waffle. Do not speak for the sake of it. | **CUE CARDS.** Do not write out your speech use cue cards the same way you would use a prompt it a play, they are there for reference if you lose your spot.  **EYE CONTACT.** If you look at the audience you will hold their attention.  **VOICE**. There are many things you can do with your voice to make it effective. You must project but do not shout. Use volume, pitch and speed to emphasize important points in your speech.  **BODY.** Make hand gestures deliberately and with confidence. If you want to walk up and down do so but move with effect and deliberately.  **NERVOUS HABITS**. Avoid them like the plague. Playing with your cue cards, pulling on a stray strand of hair, fiddling with your watch – DON’T. |

**WHY DEBATE?**

The famous OXFORD UNION debating society has been debating since 1823 and remains the jewel in the crown of the Oxford Union, Oxford University, England. The debates were founded on an ideal of the Freedom of Speech. **Remember not everyone has the privilege to be able to say what they think.**

Twelve British Prime Ministers have cut their teeth and honed their skills in the Oxford Union Debating Chamber. The union frequently play host to in excess of twelve Heads of State per year, not to mention countless actors, writers, film stars, musicians, celebrities and politicians.

1. Oxford English dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-1)