

## **Debate**

14+ years old

Debating can be a fun yet challenging way to improve public speaking skills and the ability to think whilst under pressure. This document outlines some methods you could use to conduct a debate night for your section.

### **Debate topics:**

- Contraception should be free to all
- VAT should not be paid on women's disposable sanitary items
- Funding should be increased for mental health services
- Capital punishment should be brought back
- Voting age should be reduced to 16
- University should be free to all
- Should standardized testing be abolished?
- Should the British monarchy be abolished?
- Advertising should be banned in children's TV
- Can animal testing be justified?

### **Chamber debate**

This is like a debate in the British Parliament. The topic should be set in advance so that the section has time to prepare and plan their arguments for or against the topic. It is important that there is an even number of people on each side so that all can have their voices heard.

On the day of the debate the venue needs to be set up in a similar manner to the House of Commons, with opposing arguments seated opposite each other and a speaker in the middle at the end (this is ideally a leader). The debate will begin with the speaker asking the question to be debated and then nominating the "for" group to provide their first argument. The debate will continue with a member from the opposition arguing against the idea debated and vice versa. The speaker is to make sure speeches remain concise and relevant.

Once everybody has had their opinion heard the speaker is to remind them all of the original question being debated and offers a vocal vote of "all those in favour of *[insert topic here]* say Aye; all against say No". If this is too hard to judge then the speaker will tell the groups to vote with their feet, moving to the side of the room that they favour. If this is still a tie then the speaker has the deciding vote based on the quality of the arguments presented.

### 3 vs 3 Debate

The 3 vs 3 debate is a highly structured form of debate that is often used in a competitive manner. The group should be split up into multiple large groups that then elect a team of three people to represent them at each debate. You could turn this into a competition within your unit by have each group provide more teams based on how many rounds you intend to run. Nobody should take part in more than one debate.

### Debate Teams

Each team will contain 3 members, a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> speaker

### Debate timings

Speaking	Content	Time (minutes)
Chair	Introduction	2
House 1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker	Opening Statement	2
Opposition 1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker	Opening Statement	2
House 2 <sup>nd</sup> Speaker	Rebuttal	2
Opposition 2 <sup>nd</sup> Speaker	Rebuttal	2
House	2 x Questions for Opposition	2.5
Opposition	2 x Questions for House	2.5
House 3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaker	Closing Statement	1
Opposition 3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaker	Closing Statement	1
Judges	One Question to House	2
Judges	One Question to Opposition	2
All	Questions to All	3

### Judging

Judges will assess the overall performance of the teams during the debates and also have a chance to ask a specific question to each team within the debate to better assist their decision making.

### Audience

The rest of the group will be watching the debates. They must respect those speaking and be in complete silence during the debates. The floor are encouraged to assess the debates and develop questions throughout which can then be asked when the chair opens the debate up to the floor. Questions must be asked by raising their hand and the chair will select members of the audience to ask questions. The questions can be directed to any member of either team.

### The Chair

The chair of the debate will introduce the debate topic and title. They will also introduce the members of each team and the members of the judging panel. It is the responsibility of the chair to control the timings of the debate, control the audience's questions and the overall flow of the debate.

## **Sections of the Debate**

### **Opening Statement**

The opening statement of the debate starts the debate. It is the first opportunity for your team to convey your opinion on the topic. The opening statement will often comprise of a “powerful hook” which is something that grabs the attention of the audience, this can be a question, statistic etc. The statement will then clearly identify your position in the debate, and this will be reinforced by a number of arguments that support your position. This is often concluded through the use of a powerful statement that summarises your team’s position. All evidence used within the debate must be cited correctly and these should be stated whilst speaking.

### **Rebuttal**

The rebuttal is often the most difficult part of the debate. A rebuttal is where you try to dispute the arguments that will be presented to your team by your oppositions opening statement. The rebuttal is often prepared by considering arguments that could be presented and making notes on how these could then be countered during your rebuttal. As well as the arguments considered before the debate the rebuttal will be composed during the debate to specifically argue the points made by the opening statement. The arguments considered prior to the debate will just be used to assist in the development of the rebuttal during the debate.

### **Opposition Questions**

In the question component of the debate, there will be the opportunity to ask 2 questions of the opposition in order to test the strength of their platform and test their ability to defend their position within the debate on the spot. Questions are often designed to pick holes in the opposition’s debate or weaken their position whilst strengthening your own. The strongest questions will contain powerful evidence that is difficult to disprove.

### **Closing Statement**

The closing statement should summarise all the main points made during your argument. The closing statement should also connect your team’s position to the bigger picture. This is the last chance to sell your argument to convince the audience that your position within the debate is the correct one and this had to be done in just 2 minutes! Your last line needs to be powerful, this can be emphasised through the use of a quote, an emotional plea etc.

### **Judges Questions**

These questions allow for the judges to reinforce their position within the debate. Their questions will often be very testing and can often cover viewpoints or ideas not yet considered or ask for previously covered areas in more depth. These questions will require you to be quick thinking, direct and concise in your answer.

### **Questions from the Floor**

Once all the previous steps have been completed the chair will open the debate up to the audience. This section of the debate is intended to be free flowing and controlled by the chair. Members of each team can deflect questions across to the other team. The audience can side with either the house or opposition and use their questions that have been developed throughout the debate to strengthen the position of the side they are in support of, or to diminish the argument of the side they are against.