



4 JANUARY 2021

GREATER LONDON YOUTH FOUNDATION

DEBATING ON ZOOM

DEBATING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

Debating on Zoom schedule

You will be sent the Zoom logon details each week

Term 1: Style and debating theory

Theory of debating

- Argument v debate
- PEEL
- Point of information/point of order

Practicing Style

- Gestures and eye contact
- Tone
- Timing

Roles and Functions

- Defining Motion/Rebuttal
- Chair and Timekeeper
- Summary Speaker



Speed Debate

- Parliamentary/Open Style
- Speakers/Timekeeper selected randomly
- Motions/one minute speeches

EASTER BREAK

Term 2: Content and Basic Techniques

Restricting Focus

- Depth - Breath
- Developing points
- Less is more

Argument building

- Point and implications
- Explaining and evidencing points\Linking to the Bigger Picture

Motion Analysis (Preparation for Mock Debates)

- Practice defining motions
- Reminder of roles
- Selecting speakers

Mock Debate

- Winner selected by Mentor (no chair or floor)
- Three minute speeches (two minute summary)
- Two prop: 2 Opportunities: Summary

SUMMER BREAK

Term 3: Strategy and Advance Techniques

Teamwork and Strategy

- Connecting speakers (content and style)
- Using Point of Information/Point of Order correctly
- Effective Note Taking

Advanced Techniques

- Foreshadowing and Reminding
- Introduction and Conclusion
- Argument building as a team

Full Debate Preparation

- Motion Selection
- Practice run through
- Speaker Selection

Final Debate (Recorded and uploaded)

- Winner voted on by the Floor
- Five minute speeches (three minute summary)
- 2 Prop; 2 App; Floor; Summary

Sample debate topics

Almost anything can be debated, here are some popular topics - these have been written as questions but they can be easily adapted into statements:

- Is animal experimentation justified?
- Should we legalise the possession of cannabis for medicinal use?
- Should we recognise Bitcoin as a legal currency?
- Is torture acceptable when used for national security?
- Should mobile phones be banned until a certain age?
- Does technology make us more lonely?
- Should guns be banned in the U.S.?
- Should we make internet companies liable for illegal content shared on their platforms?
- Will posting students' grades publicly motivate them to perform better?
- Should animals be used for scientific testing?
- Do violent video games make people more violent?
- Should the death penalty be stopped completely?
- Should smoking in public places be completely banned?
- Should doping be allowed in professional sports?
- Should all zoos be closed?
- Should consumers must take responsibility for the plastic waste crisis?
- Is euthanasia justified?
- Is the boarding school system beneficial to children?
- Should mobile phones be allowed at school?
- Is global warming a problem?
- Should violent video games be banned?
- Is school detention beneficial?
- Are celebrities good role models?
- Does social networking have a beneficial effect on society?
- Are single sex schools more effective than co-ed schools?
- Do celebrities get away with more crime than non-celebrities?
- Is cloning animals ethical?
- Are humans to blame for certain animal extinctions?

Dates and times for Term 1: January - March 2021

Day	Month	Day	Time
13	January	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
20	January	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
27	January	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
3	February	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
10	February	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
24	February	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
		HALF-TERM	
3	March	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
10	March	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
17	March	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
24	March	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
31	March	Wednesday	5.30-6.30 pm
		EASTER	

Term 2 dates will be available by half-term.

Reading

What is debating?

A debate is a structured contest over an issue or policy. There are two sides - one supporting, one opposing.

Benefits of debating include:

- Allowing you to think about aspects and perspectives you may not have considered.
- Encourages you to speak strategically.
- Improving public speaking skills.
- Learning how to create a persuasive argument.
- When you have to argue against your personal view you realise that there are two sides to the argument.

Debate structure

There are multiple formats a debate can follow, this is a basic debate structure:

- A topic is chosen for each debate - this is called a resolution or motion. It can be a statement, policy or idea. The motion is usually a policy which changes the current state of affairs or a statement which is either truth or false. The motion typically starts with "This House..."
- There are two teams of three speakers:
 - The Affirmative team support the statement
 - The Negative team oppose the statement
- Sometimes you will be asked to take a position in the debate but in other debates you will be allocated your position.
- Teams are provided with time to prepare - usually one hour
- Each speaker presents for a set amount of time
- Speakers alternate between the teams, usually a speaker in the Affirmative team starts, followed by a Negative speaker, then the second Affirmative speaker presents, followed by the second Negative speaker etc.
- The debate is then judged.
- There may be an audience present but they are not involved in the debate

Once you have learned how to debate in one format you can easily switch to another.

Roles of the speakers

Each speaker must typically do the following:

First Affirmative

- Contextualise the debate - clearly set out your team's interpretation of the topic and the significant issues they disagree with.
- Provide definitions if necessary.
- Outline the team line and the team split - this is where you outline your team's case and summarise the way your arguments have been divided between your speakers.
- Provide 2-3 arguments supporting the motion.

First Negative

- Re-contextualise the debate and resolve any definitional issues - if you have disagreements with the definition given by the Affirmative these must be handled immediately. If you want to challenge the definition then you must prove that you have the most appropriate definition. There are three main steps in a definitional challenge:
 1. Clearly state your definition
 2. Provide your arguments as to why this is the superior definition
 3. Rebut the Affirmative's arguments supporting their definition
- Outline a team line and team split.
- Rebut the arguments made by the First Affirmative.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments against the motion.

Second Affirmative

- If needed, resolve any definitional issues.
- Rebut the First Negative's arguments.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments supporting the motion.

Second Negative

- If needed, resolve any definitional issues.
- Rebut the arguments made by the Affirmative team up to this point, with a focus on the Second Affirmative's arguments.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments against the motion.

Third Affirmative

- Rebut specific issues raised by Second Negative and defend any other important attacks on your team's case.

- Conclude your speech with a brief summary (1-2 minutes) of your team's case. You should include the key issues which you and the Negative team disagreed on during this.
- You can introduce new material but this is interpreted as poor team planning.

Third Negative

- This is the same structure as the Third Affirmative.

There are many variations of the three against three debate, a commonly known one is Points of Information. This is used a lot in **university debates**. During a speech the opposition is allowed to ask a question or make a point. They stand up and say "point of information" or "on that point" etc. The speaker can choose to accept or reject the point. If accepted, the point of information can last around 15 seconds and the speaker can ask for it to stop at any time.

Debate definitions

Younger debaters tend to waste time defining terms so you must first decide whether you need to define a term. Ask yourself: will my speech be confusing if I don't define this term? Could the opposition misinterpret what I mean without a definition? For example, the motion could be "we should ban plastic straws". It's clear what "plastic straws" are but what does "ban" mean?

Two factors which determine the definition of the debate:

1. **Context** - what is happening in the area that relates to this issue? For example, maybe the government of a country is debating banning smoking in public buildings and you decide to define the term "passive smoking" during the debate. If a significant event related to the topic has occurred then it should be the focus of the debate, for instance, a shocking report may have recently been revealed in the media showing the widespread effects of second-hand smoking.
2. **Spirit of the motion** - topics are chosen for a reason so what sort of debate was imagined when the topic was chosen? Looking at the spirit of the motion will ensure that you pick a definition that will produce a well-balanced and important debate.

If the topic is vague then you will have more choice of definitions. You have a duty to pick a clear definition and one that will create a good debate. If not, this

may cause a definitional challenge which will ruin the debate and frustrate the judges.

For example, the topic may be "we spend too much money on the stars". Stars can refer to celebrities or astronomy so you need to choose a definition.

1. Look at the context and see if there has been a recent significant event related to either topics - the media is the best place to look.
2. Then apply second test - which definition will lead to the best debate, which will be more interesting and debatable?

If one answer passes both tests then that's your definition. If they tie then either is a good definition.

When providing your definition explain the context used to form the definition. This is important because your understanding of the context may be different from others due to various factors, such as, religion, culture, gender etc.

Basic argument structure

There are various ways of dividing up cases according to groups of arguments, such as, social/economic/political etc. You could assign each speaker to handle a group.

Place the most important arguments first, for example, "The media has more influence on self-esteem than anybody else. This is true for three reasons. Firstly (most important argument)... Secondly..., Thirdly (least important argument)..."

To structure an argument follow these steps:

1. **Claim** - present your argument in a clear statement. This claim is one reason why you're in favour of/against the motion.
2. **Evidence** - the evidence supporting your claim, such as, statistics, references, quotes, analogies etc.
3. **Impact** - explain the significance of the evidence - how does this support your claim?

Rebuttal

Arguments are weakest at the evidence stage as it's easy to argue against, for example, the evidence may consist of isolated examples or there may be

counter evidence. But it's not a good technique because the opposition can provide more evidence or rebut your criticisms.

It's difficult to rebut claims because they are usually reasonable but if you can attack a claim then that speaker's whole argument falls apart. So if you think a claim is vulnerable then rebut it but you will need a strong explanation to show why it doesn't matter.

There are common flaws you can look for to form a rebuttal:

1. False dichotomy - this is where the speaker is trying to falsely divide the debate into two sides even though there are more alternatives than they state. It's likely the speaker is doing this on purpose but in some cases they do not understand the debate.

2. Assertion - this is when a speaker presents a statement which isn't actually an argument because there is no reason to believe that the statement is valid. It may just be an assumption. You can point out that there has not been enough examination to prove this validity and then give a reason why the assertion is (probably) not valid.

3. Morally flawed - arguments can be morally flawed, for example, "All criminals given a prison sentence should be given the death penalty instead, this will save the country money and space." What has been argued is true but it's clearly morally flawed.

4. Correlation rather than causation - a speaker may suggest a link between two events and suggest one led to the other. But the speaker may not explain how one caused the other event which can make an argument invalid.

5. Failure to deliver promises - sometimes a speaker might fail to complete a task they promised to deliver. For instance, they may state that they will provide evidence supporting a certain claim but they may lose track of what they have said and not actually do this.

6. Straw man - the opposing team introduces an argument and then rebuts it. They may use an extreme example of your proposal or perhaps they were hoping that you would make this argument.

7. Contradiction - an argument the other team presents may contradict one of their previous arguments. You must point out that the arguments cannot be true simultaneously and then explain how this reduces their case's credibility.

8. Compare the conclusion to reality - think "what would happen if what they (the other team) are suggesting is implemented right now?" This usually shows that it's more complicated than they have suggested and the changes can cause secondary problems.

Scoring

Judges generally score the speakers looking at this criteria:

1. **Content / Matter** - What the debaters say, their arguments and evidence, the relevance of their arguments.
2. **Style / Manner** - How the debaters speak, including the language and tone used.
3. **Strategy / Method** - The structure of the speech, the clarity and responding to other's arguments.

Important skills for debating

To meet the judges criteria you will have to develop certain skills, consider the following:

- You points must be relevant to the topic.
- Provide evidence whenever you can and not your personal opinion.
- You must put aside your personal views and remain objective when you debate so your argument remains logical. You can be passionate about a topic but interest can turn into aggression and passion can turn into upset.
- Consider the audience's attention span - make it interesting, for example, don't just present lots of complicated statistics.
- Use rhetoric to persuade - consider using the three pillars of rhetoric:
 - Ethos - the ethical appeal
 - Pathos - the emotional appeal
 - Logos - the logical appeal
- Use notes but keep them brief and well organised. Use a different piece of paper for rebuttals.
- Similar to looking at conclusions to create rebuttals, think comparatively by asking yourself "How does my plan compare to what's happening now/what would happen in the world if the other team won?" You can

win the debate if you can make comparative claims about why your arguments matter more than the other team.

- Only tell jokes if you're naturally good at it otherwise this can backfire.
- Flexibility is important because you might get allocated the side of the argument you don't agree with. You'll have to work hard to overcome your views. Also use this insight to think of the potential arguments you might make and then plan for counter arguments.

Voice

- Speak clearly and concisely.
- You must talk fast enough to have the time to deliver your speech but slow enough so you can be understood.
- Project your voice to the back of the room.
- Incorporate dramatic pauses.
- Emphasise important words and vary your tone appropriately.

Confidence

- Have a relaxed pose and posture.
- Avoid filler words.
- Know your material.
- Emphasise using gestures and avoid nervous gestures.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience.

Language

- Keep your language simple to avoid confusion.
- Refer to the opposite side as: "My opponent".
- When making a rebuttal say: "My opponent said..., however..."
- Don't exaggerate - avoid the words "never" or "always" etc.
- Avoid saying that a speaker "is wrong", instead say that "your idea is mistaken".

What to avoid

- Falsifying, making up or altering evidence.
- Publicly disagreeing with the judges' decision.
- Attacking a speaker rather than an idea.
- Acting aggressively or offensively towards debaters, judges, audience etc.
- Interrupting other debaters as this can suggest that your argument isn't very strong.
- Disagreeing with facts or obvious truth

British Parliamentary debating is a popular form of debating so we will briefly explain it: There are four teams made up of two speakers each. Two teams are on the government's side and the other two teams are the opposition but all the teams are trying to win rather than one side. The motion is given 15 minutes before the debate begins and teams are assigned to positions randomly. They alternate their speeches, with the government's side starting. Speeches are usually 5-7 minutes.

The first two speakers on the government side are called the "opening government" and the first two speakers on the opposition's side are called the "opening opposition". The last two speakers on the government's and opposition's side are called the "closing government" and "closing opposition" correspondingly.



The speakers' roles in the opening half of the debate are similar to the roles of the first and second speakers in the three against three debate described previously. The only difference is that the second opening government and second opening opposition speakers include summaries at the end of their speeches - this is because they will also be competing with the teams in the closing half of the debate.

The closing government and closing opposition aim to move the debate on but not contradict their side's opening team. As well as rebuttal, the majority of the third speaker's time consists of presenting either: new material, new arguments, a new analysis from a different perspective or extending previously presented arguments. This is called an "extension" which must be something that sets their team apart and makes them unique.

The last two speeches of the closing teams are summary speeches - they summarise the debate and disagreements between the team. Their most important goal is to explain why their side has won the debate. They are not allowed to present new arguments but they can present new evidence and rebuttal.

During the speeches points of information are offered regularly. Speakers should only accept a maximum of two points of information. The first and last minute is protected time where points of information cannot be offered. Rather than a side trying to win, all the teams are trying to win - this allows different perspectives to be explored. The teams are then ranked 1st to 4th in the debate.

<https://virtualspeech.com/blog/guide-to-debating>

Debating Tips and Techniques

The 10 best debating tips and techniques are:

- Preparation of your topic
- Stay on topic
- Speak slowly, clearly and charismatically
- Be confident with your topic
- Think about your body language and what it's saying to your audience
- Listen and take notes
- Anticipate your opponent's questions before they're uttered
- Tell a story or give an illustration with an example to make your point
- Use a strong conclusion
- Don't take cheap shots at your opponents

We'll look at these in more detail below.

Offensive Debating Techniques: Debating Tips to Attack Your Opponent's Topic

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

This point is arguably the most important debating skill of them all as it affects many of the other debating techniques. For instance, if you prepare your material well, you'll be confident and more believable.

You'll also be less likely to go down rabbit holes, yet more likely to give a clear and cohesive illustration of your point.

If you can, try to jot down three points for your argument and three points against your argument. The latter tip means you'll also be able to anticipate your opponent's views and be able to better rebut them when they say them.

Stay on Topic

You only have a limited amount of time to state your case. If you use that time going off-topic, you lose valuable time. Stay on topic by telling your audience your three points, elaborating on them further as time permits.

Another great debating tip is to add three more points to your first three points (again, this is very much time-dependent). This will help you stay on topic too.

Speak Slowly, Clearly and Charismatically

When students are new to debating or public speaking, they often speak quickly or mumble.

This isn't very attractive or charismatic behaviour for a speaker and, in the long run, it makes it harder for the audience to like you or want to agree with your points.

When debating, you want to be amicable and likeable. People want to be on your side when you have charisma.

Be Confident With Your Topic

If you look like you believe what you're saying, your audience will also have confidence that you know what you're saying and you have a basis for it.

Conversely, if you look nervous or you seem like you don't really believe what you're saying, your audience isn't going to be filled with confidence in you or your message. So, be confident with your message. It's one of the best debating techniques of the lot!

Of course, you'll feel most confident when you've prepared for your subject well – so don't neglect preparation. One debate site put it like this: Always act like you're winning, even if you're not.

Think About Your Body Language

Another great debating technique is to make sure you're using your body language to agree with the points you're making. Make sure your body indicates confidence by:

- Looking at your audience and opponents in their faces (a look, not a stare is what you need here)
- Using your arms to talk
- Smiling (where appropriate)
- Keeping a relaxed posture
- NOT folding your arms
- NOT looking at the ground

When your team member is making their case, make sure you nod and agree with their points.

Your Audience and Judge's Body Language in Debate

Also, ensure you're thinking about your audience and judge's body language. If you do this, you'll be able to see if you are getting:

- blank stares of boredom – which means it's time to make an illustration and spice up your argument or make it more cogent
- a look of anger or frustration – which means it might be time to tone down the rhetoric or think about another angle
- rapt attention and interest – which means you're on the right track. Continue with what you're doing!

Your audience's body language can tell you a lot about whether your message is being received well, so definitely want to keep an eye on that.

Defensive Debating Techniques: Debating Tips to Protect Your Topic Listen and Take Notes

Be careful to listen to the main points of your opponent's arguments. Don't try to take notes on everything; just jot down the major arguments so you'll be able to rebut this at a future time. Also, note down any weakness in their logic that can be rebutted.

When You're the Stronger Debating Partner...

When you're debating on a team where you're the stronger debater, make sure you're not trying to answer the points that have been addressed to your weaker partner's points.

Instead, make sure you compare notes in the interim (while the opponent is speaking), showing your weaker partner how they might best score points. In this way, you're teaching your weaker partner to stand up and learn debate skills themselves instead of trying to prop up their argument. If you're on a team with them in the future, you'll find your partner is better than they were when you started.

Anticipate Your Opponents Questions Before They Come

If you're in a debating competition, you want to anticipate your opponent's questions in addition to the judge's or audience's questions.

Every argument that you make, at the end of the round, will be compared against something the other team said. If you're affirmative, for example, you should always be thinking in the mindset of "how does my plan compare to the status quo?" [i.e., doing nothing, what the negative frequently advocates]. For both sides, the most effective way to do this is through impact calculus. You should always be weighing the relative importance of arguments, especially ultimate impact claims against each other. A nuclear attack by terrorists because of the collapse of the Pakistani state is undoubtedly extremely bad, but is the spread of nuclear weapons to many more states even worse? If you make comparative claims about why your arguments matter more than the other teams, you can win the debate round even if the other team wins their arguments! A good flow will help you keep track of the arguments.

Other Debating Tips

Tell a Story or Give an Illustration with an Example

If your audience doesn't look convinced, yet you feel like your argument is convincing and you know the debate topic well, tell a short story (very short) or give a quick illustration to make your point.

Forming a picture in your listener's eyes can do a lot as 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

If your audience is also suffering from a somnolescent attitude, a story might help pique their interest once again and get you in their good books.

Use a Strong Conclusion

Even if a person wanders a little in their debate, a person with good debating skills can finish nicely with a strong conclusion that states their thesis point and main points clearly.

If this is done with confidence, a lot can be forgiven!

Also, if you're taking part in a debating competition, you want to look the judges squarely in the eye as you send your point home.

When Debating, Don't Take Cheap Shots

Avoid taking cheap shots at your opponents as the audience might just think you're a jerk. This also indicates that you're arrogant and you don't care for your opponents.

As a debater, we're not called to agree with our opponents all the time.

However, we can still love them and deal amicably with them. After all, your opponent might be on your side one day!

Specifically, don't take cheap shots by:

- Making fun of a speaker when they're nervous or they've made some fault
- Making racial slurs or commenting on a person's physique or background
- Don't heckle your opponent while they're speaking – this is rude and shows you are ill-mannered
- Taking the other person's words out of context – this is infuriating to your opponents and your judges may not be too happy when they discover this.

This all comes down to being the better man (or woman). Be gracious to your opponent in all situations, even if they're rude.

But, perhaps this isn't just a debating tip – it's a general lesson for life.

<https://howdoihomeschool.com/classical-homeschooling/debating-tips-debating-techniques-skills/>

YouTube

Click the pictures to watch some skilled debaters in practice. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but observe their style (body language) and what they are saying and how they are saying it.

Michelle Obama



How To Argue With Someone Who Won't Listen



How To Avoid Embarrassing Yourself In An Argument - Jordan Peterson



Trump Biden Presidential Debate



How To Win An Argument Without Making Enemies



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