



Debate Training Guide

Training debaters is a continual process. There is not enough time to adequately prepare students for everything they need to know in debate. Therefore, this guide is to help you understand the most important features students need to understand to get started in debate.

OVERVIEW

Ultimately, the number one thing new debaters need to know is that they are not capable of knowing everything prior to their first tournament. They may encounter scenarios you haven't prepared them for in a round. The goal is not for them to feel lost or frustrated, but to come back to you after the tournament to discuss the things they did not know. A former debater, Grant Nelson of Dowling Catholic, once said "I learned everything I don't know yet." He was optimistic because he felt that he knew the deficits and could control filling those voids by using the resources at his disposal. If your students can attend tournaments and identify things they need to learn about in the future - regardless of outcome - it was a worthwhile competitive experience.

OVERALL DEBATE CONCEPTS

Regardless of the format of debate, there are some important concepts for students to understand.

STRUCTURING AN ARGUMENT

First, the general structure of an argument applies to all formats of debate. An argument must contain these three elements: **claim, warrant, and impact.**

A claim is a declarative statement - it establishes your argument.

A warrant is the justification for your claim. It establishes why your claim is true.

An impact is the significance of your argument. It outlines why people should care about your argument.

An argument is not complete with each of these elements. The part of the argument that requires the most development, generally, is the warrant. It's easy to come up with one line reasons why something is true, however, in debate, it's important to put sufficient analysis, research, and thought behind each of your claims. Having multiple reasons why something is true, or layering your warrants, is something to explore as well. While one sentence could be a sufficient warrant for some claims, it's important to properly justify the claim so you can access your impact.

An example:

Civil disobedience trivializes good laws even if it targets only bad laws. Civil disobedience involves breaking the laws that order daily life. For example, protestors might block a street or refuse to cooperate with the police. However, once we allow protestors to break these laws, citizens will exploit these loopholes. Professor Matthew Hall explains: "Unfortunately, we have reached that point. Both disobedients and scholars advocate the abolition of punishment for civilly disobedient acts. Freedom from punishment removes a crucial deterrent that restrains civil disobedience. Acceptance of punishment establishes that civil disobedience respects the rule of law and ensures its weighty, rather than petty, character within the political debate. Another [One] danger lies with those protesters who claim participation in the tradition of civil disobedience even though they direct their conduct toward private parties, rather than the government, and thus wrongly reposition civil disobedience as direct action designed to stop particular conduct rather than as political discourse

intended to produce systemic change. On yet another front, public officials cloak their defiance of the law in the mantle of civil disobedience, posing a distinct danger, not just to the obligation to obey the law, but [and] to the need for consistent administration of the law by the legal system itself."

REFUTING AN ARGUMENT

Second, forms of refutation apply to each type of debate. Regardless of the form of debate, your students should understand how to respond to other arguments brought up in the round. Students need to understand how to properly refute what their opponent said. By understanding the structure of an argument, it becomes easier to understand basic approaches to answering it.

To answer the warrant, you would want to show that it's untrue. Essentially, you're denying the validity of the claim. You can do this by proving it false, or by proving the opponent's plan is more harmful. For instance, if an opponent claims and justifies that your plan raises taxes, you could simply show how your plan doesn't raise taxes. Additionally, you could go one step further and show how your plan doesn't raise taxes, but that your opponent's does.

To answer the impact, you would want to show the warrant is not true (see above), which establishes the impact does not happen. This is the most common strategy for dealing with an impact because typically, impacts aren't contestable. It's bad for people to die, rights to be violated, etc. However, sometimes the impact is contestable. For instance, if your opponent says that you raise taxes and that's bad for the economy, you could argue the opposite and establish why taxes being raised is good.

There are multiple strategies to attacking an argument, but these are the most basic ones to begin teaching your students.

FLOWING

Each event will require students to flow, or take notes on their opponent's arguments. Flowing in LD, Policy, and Public Forum can be very similar; however, they can also require some differences. Congressional Debate is unique from the other events. In all forms of flowing, it's important for you to come up with abbreviations for common words and/or phrases. Some examples include:

- Increase – ↑
- Decrease – ↓
- Leads to – →
- Justice – J
- Morality – M
- Human Rights – HRts
- Obligation – ob
- Statistics – stats
- Eliminate – Ø
- Equals – =
- Money – \$

There is no need to force students to use the same abbreviations. What makes sense to one student, may not work for the other. Provide them examples and allow them to test what works best for them.

EVENT SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

While the core of debate can be viewed as the same for each event, there are unique elements to each format. While it's important to understand the basic differences between events, it's always important to remember that there are few actual rules and regulations about how events are conducted. Therefore, when preparing students for their event, it's key to give them



tools to be successful, while ensuring they understand there are multiple approaches that could be taken.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public Forum involves opposing teams of two, debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to debate (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a “crossfire” (similar to a cross examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team. Often times community members are recruited to judge this event.

To learn more about Public Forum Debate, you should visit www.speechanddebate.org/publicforum for a more in-depth introduction to the event.

LINCOLN DOUGLAS DEBATE

In this one-on-one format, students debate a topic provided by the National Speech & Debate Association. Topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate but may not use the Internet in round. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination.

To learn more about Lincoln Douglas Debate, you should visit www.speechanddebate.org/lincolndouglas for a more in-depth introduction to the event.

POLICY DEBATE

A two-on-two debate that focuses on a policy question for the duration of the academic year, this format tests a student’s research, analytical, and delivery skills. Policy debate involves the proposal of a plan by the affirmative team to enact a policy, while the negative team offers reasons to reject that proposal. Throughout the debate, students have the opportunity to cross-examine one another. A judge or panel of judges determines the winner based on the arguments presented.

To learn more about Policy Debate, you should visit www.speechanddebate.org/policy for a more in-depth introduction to the event.

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

A simulation of the U.S. legislative process, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters alternate delivering speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a presiding officer to ensure debate flows smoothly. Students are assessed on their research, argumentation, and delivery skills, as well as their knowledge and use of parliamentary procedure.

To learn more about Congressional Debate, you should visit www.speechanddebate.org/congress for a more in-depth introduction to the event.

WORLD SCHOOLS DEBATE

World Schools Debate features a dynamic format combining the concepts of “prepared” topics with “impromptu” topics, encouraging debaters to focus on specified issues rather than debate theory or procedural arguments. This highly interactive style of debate allows debaters to engage each other, even during speeches. This challenging format requires good teamwork and in-depth quality argumentation.

To learn more about World Schools Debate, you should visit www.speechanddebate.org/worldschoolsdebate.

OTHER RESOURCES

The National Speech & Debate Association provides a plethora of resources for all events. Members should access their dashboards for lesson plans, videos, classroom activities, and more. There are specific lessons on flowing, refutation, and more. There are videos on how to understand basic, foundational concepts. There are so many resources at your disposal - familiarize yourself with our site and begin exploring at www.speechanddebate.org!



EVALUATION

It’s important to assess your student’s understanding after debate tournaments. Check with them about the things they felt good about. Every tournament - every student - does something effectively. It’s important to remember that, and always keep it at the forefront of what you teach your novices. After this is established, ask what they could’ve done better. Then have them outline steps they can take to work on that issue.

QUESTIONS?

We’re here to help! Supporting materials can be found at www.speechanddebate.org by logging in to the District Leader Dashboard, or contact your National Speech & Debate Association staff liaison for more information.

Unit 10

Judging Instructions

Congress judges assess quality of research and analysis of issues, argumentation (including advancing debate), skill in asking and answering questions, use of parliamentary procedure, and clarity of delivery.

Types of Judges

All judges evaluate and rank independent of each other.

- **Parliamentarian:** sits in the front of the room, next to the presiding officer (PO); responsible for starting a session, advising PO, ensuring fairness; and holistically assesses debate. At the end of the last preliminary round (or end of elimination round), ranks through total participating legislators.
- **Scorer:** sits in the rear or side of the room, and evaluates every speech, as well as PO's performance. At the end of the round, they rank the 1st through 8th best legislators (which may include PO).



Role of the Presiding Officer (PO)

Students elect peers to this *leadership* position, entrusting them with facilitating debate through **recognizing speeches, questions, and motions** in a *fair* and *efficient* manner. These leaders **sacrifice** their opportunity to speak in service to colleagues.

- Weak POs erode a chamber's capacity for meaningful debate. Lack of order leads to chaos.
- Effective POs are rare, because experienced contestants shy away from presiding. This is a direct result of the perception that judges won't rank POs

because either they don't understand the value of the position or they are uncertain as to how to compare the PO to other competitors in the room.

- **When a judge does not rank the PO, they must include an explanation as to why the PO failed to keep order in the chamber or demonstrated a lack of leadership.**

Presiding Standards for Evaluation

- **Speaker Recognition:** methods are clearly explained at the beginning of the session and executed consistently. The PO is consistent in recognition (very few

errors) and rulings, distributing speeches throughout the room, equally between schools of the same size, and among individuals.

- **Parliamentary Procedure:** command of parliamentary procedure (motions) to transparently run a fair and efficient session, seldom consulting written rules and ruling immediately on whether motions pass or fail, but consulting the parliamentarian when necessary to ensure accuracy.
- **Delivery/Presence:** dynamically fosters order and trust, and relates to peers well through vocal and physical presence. Word choice is economical and eloquent. The PO does not hesitate to rule abusive or inappropriate motions out of order. they foster trust by peers.

Presiding Officer Essentials

Speaker Recognition/Priority Rules:

1. When more than one speaker seeks the floor, the PO should:
 - a. First recognize students who have **not spoken** during the session
 - b. Next recognize students who have spoken **fewer times** (precedence)
 - c. Then recognize students who spoke **earlier** (least recently – recency)
 - d. Before above benchmarks are established—use a fair, consistent, and justifiable process.

2. The PO should open the round clearly explaining recognition process – and they should stick to it!
3. Within a round, precedence/recency does not reset, to ensure all students have equal opportunity to speak and receive evaluation. A new round begins with resetting of speaker priority, legislation not previously debated at that tournament, a new seating chart, and election of a presiding officer.

Motions: PO should pause briefly between speeches to recognize motions, and **not call** for them (at the beginning of a round, the PO may remind members to seek their attention between speeches).

Gaveling: appropriate times for the PO to gavel—to call the session to order, to denote when speaking/questioning time has lapsed, for speech time signals, and to establish order when decorum is lost. POs should **not** gavel for recognizing speakers or questioners – that only encourages *athleticism* and *ableism* for speakers to stand the fastest by emulating the start of a race.

Types of Speeches

– all equal value, and all demonstrate different skill sets.

- **Authorship/Sponsorship:** constructs advocacy by explaining need for the legislation to **solve/mitigate** a *problem*, and how it will do that.

- **First Negative:** constructs opposition by explaining how attempting to solve/mitigate a problem with the legislation will fail to meet objectives or will make the problem worse.
- **Rebuttal:** directly refutes opponents' *arguments* by explaining why they are incorrect – and **not** simply listing names of opposing legislators and/or saying they're wrong.
- **Extension:** taking a previous argument on the same side and extending the concept to a related concept or more in-depth exploration. These speeches are not rehash if new nuance is introduced.

Speeches may be a combination of rebuttal and extension.

- **Crystallization:** summarizing positions of both sides, and weighing the impacts to prove why one side wins over the other. This speech establishes key voting issues in the round.

Types of Questioning Periods

- **Traditional** – preliminary rounds – one delegate may ask one question at a time
- **Direct** – elimination rounds – questioning periods divided into 30-sec. blocks of exchange between the questioner and floor speaker.

Scoring Speaking and Presiding

- 6 – *Exemplary:* may have slight, nuanced room for improvement (recommend if necessary)
- 5 – *Accomplished:* could use a few improvements (suggest tactics)
- 4 – *Competent:* meets expectations, but should develop more depth/knowledge (offer specifics)
- 3 – *Developing:* barely meets minimum standards, and requires more growth (explain in detail)
- 2 – *Emerging:* underdeveloped skills [short arguments; lack of evidence] (describe what is needed)
- 1 – *Unacceptable:* offensive mockery or attack of peers, or (for speeches) spoke on wrong side

Going over time: When speakers extend beyond 3 minutes, their score should be lowered, and they should be downranked for monopolizing time by decreasing opportunities for others to speak.

Speaking Standards for Evaluation

- **Content**— organization, evidence and language: logical arrangement of ideas; depth of thought; support from a variety of credible quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (expert testimony) evidence analyzed to draw conclusions; compelling language; memorable introduction and conclusion; and cohesive



transitions to establish speaker's purpose and frame perspective of the issue's significance.

- **Argument & Refutation:** arguments have clear claims, are substantiated with sound, analysis and evidence, and explain the impact on those affected; these ideas are either new/fresh, or clear extensions rather than mere repetition of what has already been said; refutation of opposing arguments actually disproves them, rather than simply listing and saying they're wrong; answers to questions are given in similar structure.

- **Delivery:** vocal control and physical poise are deliberate, crisp and confident. Delivery should be extemporaneous and engaging others in the room, with few errors in pronunciation. Eye contact is effective and consistent.

Dispelling Myths of Congressional Debate

- Debate exists to advance arguments. ***Students should be prepared on both sides of legislation.*** One of the skills of Congressional Debate is being able to flip one's points if one really wants to give a speech on a particular piece of legislation, and more students seek

the opposite position. Hence, one-sided debate is highly frowned upon. If everyone is in agreement, then there is no debate!

- Students should feel comfortable ***moving the previous question*** when debate has become one-sided or debate has become stale – even if other students wish to speak. This is not rude,
- **IMPORTANT: Students do NOT need to speak on each item of legislation.** In fact, many tournaments limit debate on each legislation to prevent this from happening, and this also gives students the ability to not speak on a topic that might be a personal trigger for them.
- There is no “minimum cycle”, nor a “maximum cycle” rule, except at *certain* tournaments.
- There are **not** motions to “open the floor for debate,” “open the floor for presiding officer nominations,” nor “open the floor for agenda nominations.” These are part of the normal, established order of business for Congressional Debate, so the PO simply announces they will do these things.

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE Speech Evaluation

Student Name:		School Code:
Session:	Room:	Chamber #:

DIRECTIONS: RATE each speech 1-8 points, with one being the worst, eight being the best, providing comments to justify your rating, with constructive suggestions for improvement. At the end of the session, you will holistically and comparatively **RANK** students, on a separate form.

CRITERIA: When rating, consider the following elements and comment accordingly in the spaces provided: **ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT** (extent to which speech advances debate or merely repeats previously stated ideas; whether speaker refutes opposing arguments); **ORGANIZATION AND UNITY** (while speeches that respond to other arguments advanced in the session are often spontaneous and extemporaneous, the speaker should attempt cohesiveness); **EVIDENCE AND LOGIC** (cites credible sources and warrants claims accordingly); **DELIVERY** (extemporaneous vs. reading a manuscript, seriousness of purpose, style and poise). How well the speaker **ANSWERS QUESTIONS** for each speech should be considered.

SPEECH 1	Topic:	Side: <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> AFF <input type="checkbox"/> NEG
	Explain your evaluation and justify your rating of both speaking and answering questions:	Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 <i>highest ← → lowest</i>

SPEECH 2	Topic:	Side: <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> AFF <input type="checkbox"/> NEG
	Explain your evaluation and justify your rating of both speaking and answering questions:	Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 <i>highest ← → lowest</i>

SPEECH 3	Topic:	Side: <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> AFF <input type="checkbox"/> NEG
	Explain your evaluation and justify your rating of both speaking and answering questions:	Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 <i>highest ← → lowest</i>

QUESTIONING of other speakers

Comment on relevance to debate, quality of clarification, etc.

PRINT Judge Name:
School/Affiliation:

RANK THIS SPEAKER								
Circle one. Students not in the top eight will be given a rank of 9								
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	None

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE Presiding Evaluation

Student Name:		School Code:
Session:	Room:	Chamber #:

DIRECTIONS: AWARD A RATING of 3-8 points per hour of presiding, with three being the worst, eight being the best. You will **RANK** students, holistically, at the end of the session, on a separate form. You *may or may not* include the presiding officer in your ranking. The presiding officer may also have an evaluation ballot for speaking – please be sure to circle the same rank at the bottom of the speech and presiding forms.

CRITERIA: When rating, consider the following elements and comment accordingly below. **PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE** (clear in explaining protocols and rulings); **RECOGNITION** (fair and efficient in recognizing speakers and questioners, and maintains appropriate speaker precedence and recency); **CONTROL** (maintains decorum of delegates, and willing to rule dilatory motions/business out of order); **DEMEANOR** (fosters a respectful, professional, and collegial atmosphere); **COMMUNICATION** (overall use of language, avoiding unnecessary verbiage).

FIRST HOUR OF SERVICE	SECOND HOUR OF SERVICE	THIRD HOUR OF SERVICE
Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 highest ← → lowest	Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 highest ← → lowest	Circle Point Rating: 8 7 6 5 4 3 highest ← → lowest

SPECIFIC COMMENTS: Explain your evaluation and justify your rating, providing constructive suggestions for improvement:

PRINT Judge Name:
School/Affiliation:

RANK THIS SPEAKER								
Circle one. Students not in the top eight will be given a rank of 9								
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	None
Reminder: POs <i>may or may not</i> be considered in your ranking.								