

Debating

What is Debating

A debate is a structured contest where you try to win by creating the most convincing argument. Debates are oftentimes formal but can occur in informal settings as well.

Debate Structure

In a debate, there is usually a statement given, and participants must either choose the affirmative side or the negative side. Debate participants are given some time to prepare and then have the opportunity to speak for a set amount of time. The speakers switch turns between affirmative and negative sides, and finally a judge makes a decision on which side made the most convincing arguments and won the debate.

How to Prepare For a Debate

1. Be a Team: Work Together

Remember that you are on a team and that means you work together. Read each others' speeches, practice in front of one another, and make sure your arguments work together and follow a cohesive line of thought.

2. Write Individual Speeches

Before you come together, break off individually and have each person brainstorm on their own. This will help to bring together a larger assortment of arguments, and will help your team identify which arguments are the main ones and should be presented as such.

3. Analyze the Evidence

You will win the debate by being able to prove that you have the most sound evidence. Triple check the evidence you have to make sure it is accurate and can be proven. Find multiple sources to back your claim.

4. Arguments for Both Sides

Be prepared by having arguments ready in favor of the other side's argument. In doing this, you are preparing for what the other team will say and can potentially foresee comments from them as well as flaws in their arguments.

5. Prepare Your Speeches

Preparing your speech is an important part of the process. Write it first by yourself, then have your teammates look over your evidence and arguments. Try to discuss your speech frequently with your team so that you are all on the same page about what may happen during the debate.

6. Be Confident

The more prepared you are, the more confident you will become! Every second you spend preparing puts you that much ahead of the competition, so know that preparing will bring you confidence. During the debate, even if you are nervous on the inside, you can fake confidence by always referring to the evidence, pausing when necessary, and making eye contact.

Preparing for a debate is all about studying the material.

Tips to Win Every Debate Round



The Art of Rhetoric

- Persuade through invention:

The first part of rhetoric is invention. This means knowing your audiences' interests and desires and playing into them.

- Argument arrangement:

A good argument arrangement goes far. Try to organize your argument by making your claim, adding in evidence, and showing the impact to support the claim.

- Improve your style by remembering your speech:

If you know your speech by heart, you can start to work on your speaking style. A memorized speech gives you confidence, and with that confidence, you can focus your efforts on delivery.

- Amplify your performance by enhancing your delivery:

Gesture, body language, tone, and eye contact are all significant parts of delivery in debate. It's not just what you are saying, but how you say it that will win over the judges.

Improve Your Speaking Skills

- Get rid of filler words:

As you practice, take note of when you use filler words such as “like” or “um.” Get in the habit of replacing these words with silence. This will make you look thoughtful, rather than unprepared.

- Find synonyms for overused words:

When you use the same words multiple times in your speech, you bore your audience, appear unprepared, and less well spoken. Avoid this by writing your speech with different words for commonly used ones, and having a list of synonyms for words you believe you will commonly use.

- Slow your pace:

Speaking slowly and calmly helps to deliver your points effectively.

- Be calm when making rebuttals:

Making rebuttals can get exciting and heated, but overdoing the emotion is never a good idea. Remain calm but firm and confident during the rebuttals.

The Dramatic Effect

- Control your movement:

Make all your movements during your delivery neutral, open, defined, and strong. Don't be afraid to use the full stage to your advantage, but make controlled movements.

- Maintain eye contact:

Try to connect with as many people as possible by moving your eye contact around the room. Practice doing so line by line so you increase the number of people you make eye contact with.

- Diversify your tone:

Don't be a boring or monotonous speaker, change up your tone! Try to act as if you are talking to your audience, not reciting a speech from memory.

- The dramatic pause:

Dramatic pauses are extremely powerful, but when done at the wrong time can be detrimental to the argument. Master the dramatic pause and put it at the right time for your case.

- Close with passion:

Use a passionate tone of voice when closing — it's something that will make your argument memorable.

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