

A DEBATE AND IMPORTANCE OF DEBATING.

A **debate** is a formal discussion or argument on a given topic which follows laid down rules.

The theme or topic of the debate to be discussed and sometimes voted on is known as a **motion**. A motion is given as a formal proposal.

IMPORTANCE OF DEBATING

- > It develops the learners' confidence in any language.
- > It helps the learners to acquire skills and techniques of sustaining an argument effectively.
- > It teaches the learners to speak in an organized way on special occasions or in public.
- > It provides an opportunity for learners to argue out points on the different issues that they stand for.
- > It makes learners able to defend their ideas against reasoned attack.
- > It makes learners discipline themselves in respect to time.
- > It helps learners to learn how to summarise.
- > It helps the learners to develop the value of listening and respecting other people's views especially those with divergent opinions.
- > It helps the learners organize their thoughts.
- > It sharpens the learners to be good leaders in future.
- > It helps the learners to argue out issues fluently, confidently and convincingly on any given topic.
- > It encourages learners to research on given motions to enable them argue out points competently.
- > It helps learners to listen, respond or react to arguments or others' views using appropriate language.

SOME OF THE RULES OF THE DEBATE

- a) One must get permission from the chairperson before he/she speaks.
- b) One should not continue speaking beyond the time given to him/her or after the stopping bell has gone.
- c) Everybody should keep order.
- d) Everybody is supposed to respect the officials of the debate.
- e) Nobody should react angrily in a debate.
- f) Nobody should use abusive language in a debate.
- g) Nobody should leave the debate prematurely unless there's a prior knowledge of the chairperson for the cause of leave.
- h) Everybody must accept the ruling made by either the chairperson or the judge at the conclusion of the debate.
- i) Everybody should dress decently in a debate.
- j) No body should provoke any one in a debate.

OFFICIALS OF THE DEBATE AND THEIR ROLES

The officials depend on what type of debate is taking place. But the following can be the officials in some debates: - Chairperson, Secretary, Judge, Timekeeper, Chief whip, Error jotter, coordinator etc.

ROLES OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The chairperson is a person who presides over the debate and does not side with either side. He / She is neutral.

- a) Orders the singing of the National Anthem at the opening of the debate.
- b) Welcomes the participants and distinguished guests if any.
- c) Reads the motion to the audience.
- d) Introduces the main speakers and the officials of the debate to the audience.
- e) Tells the rules of procedure to the audience.
- f) Can allow or disallow points raised through him/her from the audience or any speaker.
- g) Controls and presides over the debate.
- h) Keeps law and order in the house.
- i) Orders the speaker taking the floor to comply in case there's a

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- point of order raised to him/her through the chairperson.
- j) Puts the motion to the vote at the end in case the judge is not involved or the points written by the secretary are less considered to determine the winner.
 - k) Declares the winner in the absence of the judge.
 - l) Invites some special officials like teacher in charge of debating, error jotter / observer or any other interested person who wish to give some comments /remarks to do so.
 - m) Gives closing remarks.
 - n) Closes the debate.

ROLES OF THE SECRETARY

- > Writes down all the points of proposers and opposers separately.
- > Reads the points given by the proposers and opposers at the time of conclusion.

ROLES OF THE TIME KEEPER.

- > Keeps the agreed time for each speaker.
- > Rings a warning and a stopping bell.

ROLES OF A JUDGE.

- > Awards marks to each speaker (Proposer or Opposer) basing on the speaker's points, fluency, audibility, posture and smartness etc.
- > Declares the winners after carefully making the cumulative total marks for each side and finding out the difference in totals.

ROLES OF THE CHIEF WHIP.

- > Appeals for contributions from the audience
- > Ensures order in the room.
- > Ensures that debaters attend, contribute and vote if necessary.

ROLES OF THE ERROR JOTTER.

- > Identifies, notes and corrects errors. ✓
- > Can also act as an observer in a debate.
- > Comments on what he/she has observed at the end of a debate especially the negative side of his/her observations.

ROLES OF THE COORDINATOR

- > Acts as a link between debaters from the audience and the chairperson of a debate.
- > Helps to pass some messages especially those written on pieces of paper within the house or audience as means of communication.
- > Organises the team of speakers to work together in an efficient and organized way.

THE PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING A DEBATE.

There are different ways to conduct a debate, particularly in the matter of the role of the audience but the main aim is always to present arguments for and against a motion.

The chairperson opens the debate. And before any speaker starts giving out his/her views, he/she should first honour and recognize the presence of officials, main speakers and the audience.

The following are examples of how different speakers can address the debaters before one starts:

- a) Honourable chairperson, Honourable speakers, the secretary, the judge, time keeper, chief whip, teacher's present, distinguished guests (If any) and the audience.
- b) Sir Chairperson (Male), the main speakers the secretary, the judge, Time keeper, Chief whip, observers and the house at large.
- c) Madam in chair (Female), the principal speakers, the secretary, the judge, Time keeper, Chief whip, Coordinator and the house at large.
- d) Madam Chairperson, Proposers and opposers, the secretary, the judge, Time keeper, Chief whip, Teachers present and academic strugglers.
- e) Honourable chairperson, the two competing sides, the secretary, the judge, Time keeper, Observer, Coordinator and all participants etc.

TEAMS OF SPEAKERS

There are always two teams of speakers namely Proposers and Opposers.

1. PROPOSERS

These are speakers who speak in favor of the motion. They support the motion or agree with what the motion says with a number of supportive reasons.

2. OPPOSERS.

These are speakers who do not support the motion. They speak against the motion or disagree with what the motion says.

THE MAIN SPEAKERS

The main speakers for either side can be two or more, depending on the debators' decision.

They take front seats. The selected main speakers for the proposition side always sit on the right side of the presiding chairperson and those for opposition side on the left side.

FLOOR SPEAKERS

These are speakers who contribute their views from the audience.

AUDIENCE

These are prepared people who attend the debate session. Some of the audience may propose the motion while others oppose it with vivid reasons and examples.

NB. The first main speakers should first define the motion before expressing their views. Any speaker should start with the strongest points before heading for weak ones using vivid examples where applicable.

SOME POINTS THAT CAN BE RAISED THROUGH THE CHAIRPERSON.

POINT OF ORDER

This is raised when the rules of behaviors in a debate are not followed correctly. e.g. when the speaker is not properly dressed, speaking while pocketing, speaking while standing in a wrong position, not audible enough, speaking while dancing or walks with a swagger i.e. walking in an extremely proud and boastful or confident way.

POINT OF DEFENCE

It is raised in order to help or protect a current speaker of your side against reasoned attack or a challenge.

POINT OF INFORMATION

It is raised when you want to give the current speaker the knowledge of the fact talked about.

POINT OF INQUIRY

This is raised when you want to know the facts of one's point of view in form of asking the concerned speaker a question.

POINT OF SUPPLEMENT.

It is raised in order to add to the views of a speaker of your side so that the point is complete, made clear or well understood.

POINT OF EDUCATION

It is raised when you want to teach the current speaker, but not of your side, what he/she should say in case there's an impurity in his/her views or when his / her views are irrelevant to the topic.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

This is raised when asking a speaker who is holding the floor to make a point clear or easier to understand by giving more information.

POINT OF NULLIFICATION/CRUSHING

It is raised when you want to defeat a speaker (not of your side) by challenging his or her argument from becoming a reality hence declaring it null and void.

POINT OF CORRECTION

This is raised when the current speaker tells a lie, makes an error, does not pronounce some words clearly or his/her views are not accurate and you want to correct him/her especially when he goes astray or his views are off topic.

POINT OF DISAGREEMENT

This is raised when you do not concur with the speaker especially when he/she is not speaking the truth.

POINT OF DISQUALIFICATION

This is raised when you want the chairperson to stop or discontinue the current speaker from giving out his/her views in case the speaker deliberately refuses to follow the rules or his/her views are too dramatic and off topic.

METHODS OF JUDGING THE WINNING TEAM IN A DEBATE.

Different types of debates have different ways of deciding the winner.

Here are some of the methods:

- a) The chairperson can allow the audience to vote at the end.
- b) The chairperson can decide to judge the winner him/herself after carefully noting the arguments given by each side and declare which side was most convincing.
- c) The secretary can read out the points given by each side i.e proposition side and opposition side and the chairperson declares the one with more points a winner.

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- d) Learners/debators can sit on the side of the room next to the team arguing for the motion they support. As the debate goes on, they can change side according to the convincing arguments they hear. At the end of the debate the winning team/side is the one with the most members of the audience on its side.
 - e) The Judge can award marks to every speaker from each side basing on the following:
 - i. The number of points given by each speaker.
 - ii. Fluency (Speaking English smoothly and accurately).
 - iii. Audibility (Being heard clearly or speaking in a loud and appropriate voice)
 - iv. Posture (The way in which one holds himself as he stands, walks or sits).
 - v. Smartness etc.
- The Judge will then make cumulative totals for both sides and declares one with the higher total marks the winner.

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