

DEBATE HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

Increasing numbers of Toastmasters clubs are discovering the many benefits of including formal debate as part of their programs. A formal debate will stimulate a dynamic and informative meeting.

Development of debate programs also offers Toastmasters the opportunity to make a significant contribution to their community. Starting with intra-club debates, the program can then be expanded to include inter-club, inter-area, and inter-district meets. As the debaters become more cognizant and polished, they can then begin to invite outside groups to attend. By selecting a topic that's of current importance in your local community, the participants and the audience will have the chance to become more knowledgeable about the subject and more readily able to form an intelligent opinion.

When you plan to stage a debate of this nature, work up an announcement of the topic, participants, time, and place. Circulate it to the various news media in your community. Be sure also to contact the officials of other organizations, church groups, and schools, inviting their members or students to your debate. Provide them with a copy of your announcement so they may pass it around or post it on a bulletin board.

This booklet will provide you with some of the basic principles of debate. Toastmasters who are interested in learning about the subject in more detail should refer to the books listed on page 11.

How You Can Benefit from Debating

A formal debate offers to the Toastmaster an outstanding opportunity to develop the three basic abilities that are the foundation of the entire Toastmasters program. It develops better listening, thinking, and speaking not only for participants but for spectators as well.

Participation in a debate develops your ability to make a quick response, present coherent arguments, and make a clear presentation of your views. Nowhere else can a Toastmaster find a more ideal method for learning competitive speaking in a "head-on" situation.

What Is Debate?

A debate is a speaking event in which two sides use reasoned discourse to argue about a particular subject. The immediate goal of each team is to convince a panel of judges and the audience that its arguments on the subject are better than those of the opposition. The emphasis is on logic, but emotional appeals and logical arguments that also carry emotional weight may be used. However, debate generally is characterized by emphasis on logical, not emotional appeal.

Organizing the Debate

Any debate must begin with the proposition, or subject, to be debated. In all cases it should be a declarative sentence which advocates a change from the *status quo* (the way things presently are being done). A debate proposition generally will be one of three general types: it will deal with a question of policy, fact, or belief. A good topic will likely be one based on policy rather than fact or belief because a factual proposition allows too little room for argument, while a proposition based on belief or opinion often permits too much room for argument.

A debate proposition normally is stated in a formal style, which includes, basically: "Resolved: That should" The word "should" is used to convey the meaning "ought to" and does not imply the proposition indeed will come to pass. To provide more interest in the debate for both participants and audience, the proposition should deal with a topic that's of immediate general interest.

Care should be taken when wording a proposition, that it does not provide unfair advantage to one side. The terms must be defined, and the proposition should include only the major issue.

Examples of typical debate propositions would be:

"Resolved: That the national government should guarantee the opportunity for a higher education to all qualified high school graduates."

"Resolved: That the city should put a crosswalk in front of the library."

One of the reasons for stating the proposition in such a way is that it provides speakers the opportunity to take sides. A speaker or speakers will take the affirmative side of the proposition (support it), while the other speaker or speakers will take the negative side (oppose it). Each team then is identified merely as "the affirmative" or "the negative."

Before proceeding with the debate, all participants should agree upon the wording of the proposition, making sure it's clearly and fairly stated.

Debate Formats

All debates consist of constructive and rebuttal speeches by each side. Each debate begins with the first affirmative speaker presenting the proposition and defining unclear or controversial terms contained in its wording. Any disagreement on the wording should be brought out by the first negative speaker. Thereafter, various formats may be used; but since not all of them will be of general interest to Toastmasters, only the more common types will be outlined here.

Standard or Traditional Debate

(Four Speakers)

Constructive Speeches

Affirmative #1	—10 minutes
Negative #1	—10 minutes
Affirmative #2	—10 minutes
Negative #2	—10 minutes

Rebuttal Speeches

Negative #1	—5 minutes
Affirmative #1	—5 minutes
Negative #2	—5 minutes
Affirmative #2	—5 minutes

A special type of debate was devised for Toastmasters International. It works well in club programs because it includes prepared speeches and a cross-examination period and still takes only about thirty-five minutes.

Special TI Debate Format

(Four Speakers)

Constructive Speeches

Affirmative #1	—5 minutes
Negative #1	—5 minutes
Affirmative #2	—5 minutes
Negative #2	—5 minutes

Cross-examination and Refutation

Negative #1 cross-examines	
Affirmative #1	—3 minutes
Affirmative #2 cross-examines	
Negative #2	—3 minutes
Negative #1 refutation and summary	—3 minutes
Affirmative #1 refutation and summary	—3 minutes

Presumption and Burden of Proof

The presumption in debate is that the *status quo* is satisfactory until it has been proven otherwise. The burden of proof therefore is upon the affirmative. They must prove that present conditions are such that a change from the *status quo* is desirable.

Issues

Issues in a debate are important questions that will be answered *yes* by the affirmative and *no* by the negative. These issues are crucial points which must be substantiated by evidence. The affirmative must find all the issues inherent in the wording of the proposition and must also be prepared to answer three stock issues. Most debate textbooks suggest that, in questions of policy, these issues are:

1. Is there a need (or is it desirable) for a change?
2. Is there a plan by which the need can be satisfied?
3. Would the benefits of the plan outweigh the disadvantages?

Issues for the negative would be the opposite of these. They would be:

1. The present system is satisfactory or improving.
2. The proposed plan would be disadvantageous.
3. The proposed change will not be a practical solution to the problem.

It is advisable when planning a debate for a Toastmasters program to limit the number of issues inherent in the wording of the proposition. Otherwise the debate will be too long and complicated. Our "crosswalk" proposition has only one major issue in its wording, while our other example contains more issues and would take longer to debate.

Preparation for the Debate

In their preparation for a debate, debaters should analyze the proposition and the arguments for and against its adoption. Initially, there should be a review of what seems to have created the problem indicated by the wording of the proposition. The wording of the proposition then should be studied to see that there is no inherent advantage for one team or the other.

It generally is also a good idea to study the background of the question to get an idea of the situation from which the debate proposition emerged. Following this, collect all the arguments and evidence you can find which relate to the proposition. Many debaters will check with their local library about back issues of magazines and newspapers which carry information on the subject.

Your next step should be to narrow the question and put aside all extraneous material. At this point in your preparation it is helpful if you can mutually agree with the opposition about exclusion of material. For example, it may be agreed that the constitutionality of a proposition should be regarded as irrelevant material since the constitution has been amended many times and can be amended again.

You should gather as much evidence as possible, keeping track of your sources. Many debaters have found it helpful to organize evidence on cards, keeping these cards in a box in front of them.

Arrive early at the place where the debate will be held and see where the timekeeper is located. Establish what the various signals mean.

In the actual presentation of the debate the affirmative does not need to state that it has the burden of proof, nor does either team need to mention the presumption. But both teams and the judges should understand these concepts in order to understand the responsibilities of the debaters. Similarly, the affirmative team need not use the term "issues" nor state the issues in the debate itself, but speakers must understand the issues beforehand so they may come to grips with them during the debate.

Contentions

Contentions are statements which come directly or indirectly from the analysis of the proposition and the arguments and are used to support the issues.

A contention, however, is not proof nor is it to be regarded as an issue in the debate. The affirmative contentions usually will be that there is a demand for an immediate change from the *status quo* and that this change can be brought about in such a way that it would not only solve the problem but would be a further advantage.

In developing their contentions, the affirmative usually will point out how their plan is capable of practical administration. The negative contentions will parallel these contentions, opposing them at every point. For instance, the negative would contend that the present system is operating satisfactorily and that necessary adjustments already are being made for any evils pointed out by the affirmative. The negative would also contend that the dangers and evils implicit in the proposed change would outweigh any advantages. The negative would then challenge the administration of the plan and its enactment, pointing out there are certain evils here, too.

Building Your Case

Each team must build its case in a logical manner. Stated another way, building a case is the formal, methodical presentation of your team's arguments. Normally a case is built upon three to five major contentions, each backed with evidence to support the issues of the debate. There is no substitution for research. Each contention used to build your case should be supported with valid evidence that has been gathered from research. No contention will be allowed to stand if it is not backed with evidence, and evidenced contentions made by the opposition.

There are several types of cases which can be used. The following section outlines the more commonly used ones for both the affirmative and the negative.

Types of Cases

Types of Cases for the Affirmative

One of the most common types of cases is the STOCK ISSUE CASE, in which the affirmative uses the stock issues to support its position. Using this method, the affirmative must: one, establish that existing conditions demand a change from the *status quo*; two, identify a plan which will provide the change; and three, show that the proposed change will be better than the *status quo*. The case is won by isolating the issues inherent in the proposition and by presenting logical, valid evidence which supports these issues. (The negative stock issue case would be built by proving the opposite.)

The concept may be illustrated by comparing it with a legal situation. Burglary in one state, for example, is defined as "*breaking and entering a building* with the *intent* to commit a *felony or misdemeanor* therein." All the italicized words constitute issues, and the prosecuting attorney (affirmative) would have to support each of them to win the case (the debate). If the prosecutor proved that the defendant broke into and entered the building but failed to prove intent, the defendant might be guilty of a lesser crime but not burglary. (The affirmative did not substantiate all the issues.)

A CHAIN OF REASONING CASE is a refinement of the stock issue case and employs a series of syllogisms related logically to one another. Therefore, if one of the series is accepted, it is reasonable to accept the others.

The TOPICAL CASE is one in which the affirmative introduces two or more contentions by using the methods employed in a stock issue case, then uniting these contentions in the proposed change.

The DISJUNCTIVE CASE is one in which the affirmative presents two contentions that are not related. If either contention stands in the debate, the affirmative has then supported the proposition. This technique forces the negative to deal with both contentions.

The RESIDUE CASE is based upon the idea that the reason for accepting the proposition is the failure of other solutions. The affirmative usually discusses various attempts that have been made to correct the problem and points out that none of these have been successful. They then advance their own proposal and suggest it will succeed.

Types of Cases for the Negative

One of the most effective methods of building a case for the negative is the DYNAMIC STATUS QUO CASE. This is, in essence, an "adjustment and repairs" case built upon the idea that the *status quo* is rapidly changing and that necessary adjustments already are being made. The negative usually points out that the affirmative has exaggerated the evils in the present system. Then, after minimizing the evils, they point out that necessary adjustments are being made. If the negative can refute the evils pointed out by the affirmative and establish that adjustments are being made, they have weakened the affirmative's "need" issue. This type of case usually involves pointing out new evils which would emerge from the "radical change" proposed by the affirmative. The negative usually points out, too, that the affirmative plan would be impossible to administrate and would not really meet the needs as established in the first part of the negative's arguments against the affirmative's case.

The COUNTER PLAN CASE is one in which the negative generally will admit some part of the need as presented by the affirmative. The negative then suggests an alternate proposal that is different from the affirmative's and will solve the problems mentioned by the affirmative in their analysis of the proposition. The negative will cite advantages of their own plan, minimizing and discounting the plan of the affirmative. Remember, in a case of this nature the negative assumes the burden of the proof that the counter plan will not only meet the need but will be a better solution than the affirmative's proposal. In essence, the negative, by advocating a counter plan, has taken over part of the role normally assumed by the affirmative. It thus is essential that their plan be significantly different from the plan of the affirmative.

A matter of ethics is involved in presenting a counter plan, and the negative should not wait until the second negative constructive speech to introduce it. Rather, the first negative speaker should explain that a counter plan is being used, and the speaker should develop the counter plan as completely as possible in the speech.

Another type of case for the negative is called the EVEN IF CASE, in which the negative refutes the need for a change and then proceeds to show that "even if" the *status quo* were unsatisfactory, the affirmative proposition would not be advantageous or practical. Basic to the "even if" case is the contention that there is no need for abandoning the *status quo* and, even if conditions were as bad as the affirmative contends, the affirmative proposal would result in even greater evils.

Another effective method for building a case by the negative is DIRECT REFUTATION, in which every argument advanced by the affirmative is dealt with, countered and defeated by the negative. Within this category are several types of cases that can be built. The first is the "shotgun" approach in which the negative merely attacks each and every premise the affirmative presents. This is one of the weakest methods of building the negative case. A better method is that of summarizing the affirmative's arguments into some key contentions and clearly stating the *prima facie* case. The negative then attacks the major points, using a rifle instead of a shotgun.

Speaker Responsibilities

Constructive Speeches

Affirmative #1

1. Give the introduction
 - a. State the resolution.

- b. Show the purpose and importance of the debate.
 - c. Give a brief history.
 - d. Define the terms of the resolution.
 - e. State the general terms.
 - f. Summarize the affirmative position.
 - g. Explain the procedure (what you will cover; what your partner will cover).
2. State the body (proof) of the case.
 - a. Cover the need issue (or whatever is the first main argument).
 - b. Support the first issue with examples, facts, etc., always giving the sources.

Negative #1

1. After greeting audience, accept or reject definition of terms as presented by affirmative #1.
2. Fill in any necessary information missing from the affirmative #1's introduction of the debate question (such as history, analysis of the problem, etc.).
3. Give general refutation of the points covered by affirmative #1.
4. Summarize the negative position (what you will cover, what your partner will cover).
5. Present your part of the negative argument.
 - a. Cover your "no need" argument, or whatever is your first issue.
 - b. Provide evidence and proof for your contentions.
6. Summarize your points and refer again to what your partner will cover.

Affirmative #2

1. Give brief refutation of the negative #1's charges or questions.
2. Refer again to the plan you are adopting by reiterating the need issue covered by your partner.
3. Give your portion of the body of your case.
 - a. Cover the practicability issue (or whatever is the second issue in the case).
 - b. Provide evidence (proof) for your arguments.
 - c. Cover the benefit issue (or whatever is your third major argument).
 - d. Provide evidence to support the third issue.
4. Summarize your arguments
5. Provide the close of the affirmative case by restating your position and by appealing to the audience for acceptance of your case.

Negative #2

1. Give refutation of affirmative #2's charges or questions.

2. Give further reference and support for your partner's points in your over-all plan.
3. Give your portion of the body of the negative argument.
 - a. Cover the "not practicable" issue, or whatever was selected for the second main issue.
 - b. Provide supporting evidence of your arguments.
 - c. Cover the "no benefit" issue, or whatever is your third main argument.
 - d. Provide supporting evidence of the third argument.
4. Summarize your main points.
5. In closing the negative presentation, restate your position and try to secure audience acceptance.

Refutation and Rebuttal Period

After the constructive speeches is a period of cross-examination or of refutation and rebuttal. (Refutation is an attack upon what has been said by the opposition, while rebuttal is a reinforcement of what has been advanced by your own team.) There usually is very little time between the last constructive speech of the negative and the first rebuttal speech. The negative team, however, should have some opportunity to confer before the rebuttal speeches begin so they may decide which line of action to take in the refutation period.

Negative #1

1. Summarize what your partner has said, and amplify those parts you think necessary.
2. Concentrate on impracticality of affirmative plan and point out new evils emerging from adoption of their plan.
3. Discount any advantages cited by affirmative for their plan.
4. Attempt primarily to prove there is no need for change from *status quo*.
5. End with short summary.

Affirmative #1

1. Summarize high points of the debate so far, presenting the affirmative case in terms of what has been established and the negative arguments in terms of what the affirmative has said about it.
2. Counter all the opposition's arguments directly, pointing out weaknesses in logical structure.
3. Restate all the contentions of the affirmative team.
4. End with a short summary.

Negative #2

1. Summarize debate to that point, emphasizing crucial issues still under consideration.
2. Refute what the affirmative has established, especially the *prima facie* point.
- Avoid calling for more information, because it can be supplied by affirmative #2 and not refuted.
4. Review all major objections the negative has to the affirmative proposal.
5. Close with direct appeal to audience to concur with the negative.

Affirmative #2

1. Analyze entire debate and boil down to the critical issues.
2. Fairness requires that no new or uncalled-for material be introduced.
3. Refute arguments advanced by the negative.
4. Provide rebuttal material to strengthen your team's case.
5. Tie all major points together and point out what affirmative has accomplished.
6. Restate how need has been established and how recommended plan meets that need.
7. Close asking for concurrence with affirmative position.

One of the more important aspects of staging a debate is having it properly judged. It is important that the judges understand the principles of debating and judging and the responsibilities of the teams.

Your club's educational vice-president should meet with the individuals who will be judging your debate well in advance of the actual meet. They should review the principles of judging contained in this booklet, making sure they are understood clearly. It also will be helpful to refer to some of the texts listed in the bibliography on page . Ask the librarian in your local library for help in finding them.

Judging a Debate

Debate decisions are based on which team does the better debating. The judge should not permit his own convictions on the topic being debated to influence the decision. Remember that the debaters are debating each other, not the judge.

The judge should attempt to determine which team established the greater probability for its position. Normally, the debate revolves around the significance of the problem and its causes; the relative desirability and practicability of the proposed solution as opposed to the *status quo*; or some other alternative solution proposed by the negative.

Other things to consider:

1. The affirmative must show that a problem exists, explain its nature, and indicate its causes. They must show how their proposed solution will better meet the problem than it is presently being met, or than it would be met by an alternative solution proposed by the negative.
2. The negative must show that the present solution is more advantageous than the affirmative solution. The negative may also argue that no problem exists.
3. The probability of one side or the other is established because the quantity and quality of the evidence and soundness of the reasoning would indicate that one solution is more likely to be advantageous than the other.
4. In academic debate, the affirmative has the responsibility to establish the probability that its proposal will solve the problem. Should the negative choose to defend a counter plan, the negative assumes the responsibilities for proving that its proposal will better solve the problem than the affirmative proposal.

The following factors should be considered in judging a debate:

1. In the event that either side presents a long series of relatively unsupported arguments (shotgun case), the only obligation of the opposition is to point out that the arguments have not been supported and to insist that the side advancing such arguments develop them before they are worthy of refutation.
2. An argument is presumed won by a side if it is not challenged by the opposition, no matter how poorly the argument may have been developed.
3. The case for or against the proposition must be presented and developed in the constructive speeches. It is the purpose of the rebuttal to answer arguments already developed, not to build new ones.
4. Although the judge should let the debaters answer each other's arguments, he should remember that in the last affirmative rebuttal there is no possibility of refutation by the negative. The judge should, therefore, be wary of last-minute attempts by the affirmative to answer negative arguments that the team has not previously attempted to refute.
5. Both teams should be debating the same thing; i.e., they should agree on definition

of terms. The affirmative has a right to initiate any fair definition. If the negative feels the affirmative definitions are unfair, they must present their own definitions and justify them. If the negative fails to object to the definitions, the definitions stand.

6. In no case should a judge stop the debate until the expiration of all speeches.
7. In no case should a judge give a consolation or sympathy vote to the weaker team, or award a tie vote.
8. Although the principles previously stated are primary, the judge should penalize, depending upon the severity of the practice, such things as courtesy toward opponents, distortion of opponent's remarks, obvious fabrication of evidence, etc.
9. When there is a checklist on the ballot, the judge should remember it is provided as an aid to the debater; the judge should not assume that the items listed have equal value.
10. Delivery by itself should not be a major factor in determining the decision. However, delivery will influence the clarity and credibility of the ideas.

Judges should be supplied with a debate ballot for helping them with their decision. The sample ballot shown on pages 13 and 14 has been used successfully in a number of Toastmasters debates. You probably will want to use it as a guide in developing a ballot for your debate programs.

A formal debate will be an interesting variation from your regular club programming. It provides an entertaining way for Toastmasters to improve their speaking, listening, and thinking. This booklet outlines the basic procedures for staging a debate and will provide you with enough information to organize one for your club. To learn the finer points of debate presentation and judging, we suggest you consult one or more of the books listed in the accompanying bibliography.