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# WHAT IS A DEBATE?

A debate is a structured argument. Two parties take turns to speak alternately for and against a particular topic. Each person is allocated a time to speak.

## HOW TO DEBATE?

### INFORMAL DEBATE

#### **Start a debate by asking questions.**

By probing with questions, you can gradually reveal an argument. Since you're not engaging in a formal debate, you don't really know what side of the argument the other person is going to take, or what they necessarily believe in. Ask questions to narrow things down.

Example: *"So do you believe that school should be allowed to beat children to give punishment"*

#### **Understand the other person's position.**

Ask them to clarify any confusing areas. Try to gently get them to adhere to one line of arguments that are more or less consistent.

Example: *"So, if I understand what you're saying, you mean that the cleanliness drive in India has become successful"*

#### **Introduce your counterargument.**

After you've respectfully echoed what they say, introduce your counterargument. Explain the gist of what you believe and how it runs contrary to their argument. Try to think of an idea as solid as theirs is. Don't just say they are wrong: think of a thing you can really argue for that is itself a solid belief.

- For example, if they *say the government has successfully implemented cleanliness drive* don't just say, "What I believe is that you're wrong and that's a terrible idea."
- Instead, counter their idea with another: "*I think the government should focus on the program in all places and not just city to be called successful. Offer rebuttals to the other person's argument.*"

After you have stated your counterargument, try to rebut their argument with supporting arguments as well as evidence that supports those arguments.

### ***"HAS GANGA CLEANING BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?"***

## **Respond to any of the other person's rebuttals.**

More than likely, the other person you're debating will take issue with some of the things you are saying. Remember their rebuttals and tackle them when the other person has finished speaking

## **Spot logical errors.**

When someone makes an argument that isn't sound in structure, catch it and gently correct it. You might respond, "I understand that concern, but I think there's a flaw in your logic."

## **Be casual**

Don't pursue a topic your friend doesn't want to pursue. If you are both enjoying the debate, be sure to express friendliness and stay relaxed throughout. **Don't:**

- Assume the other person means ill. They might misspeak or the debate could get unintentionally heated.
- Raise your voice or let things get heated. Try not to get so wrapped up in the debate that you lose your cool. A debate should be civilized and enlightening

## Don't repeat the same arguments over and over again.

Some debates come full circle and then keep on going because neither party is willing to admit defeat. If you become involved in a debate that never ends, don't push it. Just say: "I respect your opinion. I don't agree with you, but maybe I will in the future. Give me a little bit of time to think it over?"

## FORMAL DEBATE

### Adhere to all rules and professional standards.

While rules will vary situation to situation, many standards are common to most debates. For important formal debates—really for any debate you want to win—wear a suit or equally formal wear.

- Face the judge when you speak, and speak standing.
- Keep your cell phone off.
- Do not curse.
- Limit jokes to those that would be appropriate in a professional setting. Don't tell jokes that are insensitive.
- The chairperson will start the debate, and the first speaker will present their speech. The order of the speakers is generally affirmative, negative, affirmative, negative, and so on.

### Define the topic simply when necessary.

Debating "*That the death penalty is a just and effective punishment*" is probably already pretty clear, but what if you're given a topic like "**That happiness is a nobler trait than wisdom**?" You might need to offer a definition of the topic before you proceed.

- The affirmative always gets the first and best opportunity to define the topic. To

define well, try to imagine the way an average person on the street might define the topic. If your interpretation is too creative, the other team might attack it.

- The negative team is given an opportunity to challenge the definition and offer their own, but only if the affirmative definition is unreasonable or it renders the negative's position obsolete

## **Support your argument.**

If you say "**I think the death penalty should be abolished**," be ready to prove why this is the best course of action. Provide supporting arguments, and give evidence for each. Your opposing arguments might be "the death penalty makes us look bad in the international community."

## **Choose what to include carefully.**

If you don't know it, don't debate it unless you have no other choice. If you don't know much about the topic, try to at least come up with some vague information. Use religion only when appropriate as argument, as not everyone takes these sources to be the truth.

## **Know what aspects of the debate you will be judged on, if appropriate.**

- **Matter** is amount and relevancy of evidence. How much evidence does the speaker use to support his/her claims? How strongly does the evidence used support the argument?
- **Manner** is eye contact and engagement with audience. Don't stare at your cue cards! Speak clearly. Use your body to emphasize your arguments: stand straight and gesture confidently. Avoid stammering, fidgeting, or pacing.
- **Method** is team cohesion. How well does the entire team organize their arguments and rebuttals? How well do the individual arguments mesh together, as well as the rebuttals? How clear and consistent is the team line?