

# Sunshine Coast Schools' Debating Competition



**STUDENT & COACH  
HANDBOOK**

2017

# WHAT IS DEBATING?

Debating is arguing as a team. It is a formal way of organising and presenting an argument, in a team of **three**. As in any argument, there are people whose job it is to prove that a particular point of view is true. They are known as the **Affirmative Team**. Those who disagree with the topic must prove it is not true: they are known as the **Negative Team**.

Because debating is a team activity, the focus during preparation is for the team to decide on their approach to the topic and for the team, together, to determine the points that they will present. Because of this, speakers do not present their own personal opinions about the topic but they present the arguments and case structure that the team has decided.

Apart from presenting logical and sensible arguments to support their case, team members have also to attack the arguments that their opposition presents. This is called **rebuttal**. Arguing against the points presented by the opposition is one of the exciting things that makes debating very different to public speaking. Every speaker in a debate, except the first speaker of the affirmative team, must attempt rebuttal.



# WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF A DEBATE?

As debating is a formal way to present an argument, there are three elements that need to be incorporated into a debate.

## (1) *MATTER*

Matter is the factual material used in proving your case. The first and second speakers of each team should present two or three points that will prove their case. Below is an example of how to structure a point.

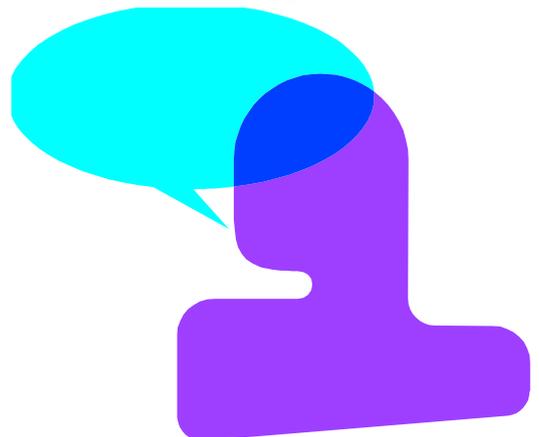
- ✓ State the point. This is a topic sentence that summarises what this point is about and how it proves your case.
- ✓ Explain what this point is stating. Elaborate. Provide a detailed explanation. You can use the phrase “The reason for this is...” to start this explanation.
- ✓ Provide evidence or examples.
- ✓ Tie these examples back to the topic sentence. You can use the phrase “ This proves our case because...” to start this section.
- ✓ Summary sentence. Summarise what you have proved in one sentence.

In topics that include the word ‘should’, teams need to decide whether their side of the case requires them to provide a **model**. A model is explanation of how they will make this situation occur. An example would be in the topic: ‘That we should ban the paparazzi.’ The affirmative team would provide a model that gives an indication of what they will put in place to ensure they are banned. How will they put a ban into place? The opposition might state that they don’t want to ban the paparazzi, rather they want to restrict them. They would then provide a model of how they would enforce restrictions.

**Rebuttal** is an important part of a debate. It is your chance to show that there are faults in the opposition’s matter. The most important skill needed in rebuttal is to be a good listener. Listen to what the opposition has said and then decide why your team does not agree with it. Remember to attack the opposition’s arguments, NOT them personally.

Below is an example of how to structure rebuttal.

- ✓ The opposition has said...
- ✓ It is wrong because...
- ✓ On the other hand, we believe...
- ✓ This is the correct because....



## (2) MANNER

Manner is the way you use your voice, body language and gestures to convince the audience that your side of the argument is the correct one.

To convince the audience, a debater must be passionate and convincing.

Do not use language that is rude, offensive or sarcastic. This includes making comments about race, religion, gender, sex.

Some of the key mannerisms that impact on manner include:

### ***Eye contact***

- ✓ look at various sections of the audience
- ✓ don't read your speech from your palm cards

### ***Palm cards***

- ✓ use palm cards, not large pieces of paper
- ✓ palm cards should fit into your hand
- ✓ hold palm cards in one hand
- ✓ look at cards at the end of sentences, not in the middle of sentences
- ✓ try not to have your whole speech written on the cards; use dot points or phrases to prompt you

### ***Gestures***

- ✓ Move your body to help you convince the audience ( eg step forward to emphasise a point)
- ✓ Use both hands (so palm cards need to be held in one hand)
- ✓ Don't let your movement be a distraction or over-dramatic

### ***Voice***

- ✓ Use your voice to show you are passionate about the argument
- ✓ Vary volume, pace, pitch to create expression

### ***Pace***

- ✓ Use a pause at the end of important points
- ✓ Slow down to allow the audience to understand and follow your arguments



### (3) *METHOD*

Method refers to the structure of your argument. This refers to the structure of your team's case and also to the structure of your individual speech.

Team's Case:

- ✓ All taking the same approach to proving your side of the argument.
- ✓ All using the same case line to tie your argument together.

Individual's Case:

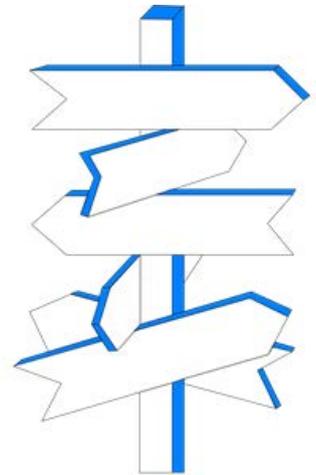
- ✓ Completing the duties required for the position you are speaking in the debate.

## STRUCTURE OF EACH SPEECH

Because debating is a formal, team argument, there are different roles for each speaker. It is useful for beginning debaters to **signpost**. This means they will signal to the audience what they are doing, by the words they are using.

Some examples of signposting include:

- ✓ Good evening Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen.
- ✓ Tonight we have defined the topic as...
- ✓ Tonight our team's case line is that...
- ✓ I will now present some flaws in the opposition's case. (to begin rebuttal)
- ✓ The opposition has stated that...
- ✓ My first point is that...
- ✓ In summary I have shown you that...
- ✓ In conclusion...



There are specific duties that each speaker must complete in a debate. They are outlined below.

<b>AFFIRMATIVE</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal Introduction</li> <li>• Definition</li> <li>• Case Line (Team Theme)</li> <li>• Split (what each speaker will discuss)</li> <li>• Team outline</li> <li>• Model (if a 'should' topic)</li> <li>• Individual Arguments (two or three)</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Rebuttal</li> <li>• Case Line (Team Theme)</li> <li>• Split (what each speaker will discuss)</li> <li>• Model (if necessary in a 'should' topic)</li> <li>• Individual Arguments (two or three)</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Rebuttal</li> <li>• Individual Arguments ( two or three)</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Rebuttal</li> <li>• Individual Arguments ( two or three)</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>
<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Rebuttal</li> <li>• Summary of team's case and arguments</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Rebuttal</li> <li>• Summary of team's case and arguments</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>



# USE OF PLANNING TIME

In a short preparation debate, teams will have one hour to complete all of their preparation and be ready to debate. This form of debating requires good use of the hour to ensure that the team has developed its arguments and each speaker knows what their points will be. Please don't use the boards in the rooms; bring your own sheets of paper on which to write.

## ***Equipment***

Each team can bring the following materials in to the preparation room:

- ✓ Blank sheets of paper for team brain-storming and planning. Please don't use the boards in the rooms.
- ✓ Palm cards
- ✓ Dictionary and Thesaurus
- ✓ Phones or laptops (the university cannot provide internet access)
- ✓ Writing materials such as pens and pencils
- ✓ Any device such as a stop watch or phone that can be used for timing

Here is a model of how you can use the hour to plan and prepare a debate.

## ***Suggested Time Allocations***

### **0-10 minutes**

Brainstorm your ideas. The team coach should record all of the possible ideas on pieces of paper. Consider all options at this stage.

Possible questions to ask include:

- ✓ What does this topic mean?
- ✓ What points are there for our side of the argument?
- ✓ Do we have reasons why our argument is true, not just examples?

### **10-25 minutes**

Decide:

- ✓ your team's definition.
- ✓ the scope of your topic eg does 'we' mean everyone in the world or all Australians?
- ✓ which are the main arguments.
- ✓ which examples support the arguments.
- ✓ a case line or theme for your team's case. Come up with a one line statement that summarises why your argument is true. This is your theme or case line.

### **25-30 minutes**

- ✓ Split the arguments between the first two speakers.
- ✓ Each speaker should have two main arguments.
- ✓ Each of the first two speakers should have different arguments, not just repeat the arguments of their other speaker.

### **30-50 minutes**

- ✓ First and second speakers need to prepare their speeches.
- ✓ The third person should prepare their summary of their team's arguments.

### **50-60 minutes**

- ✓ Regroup as a team.
- ✓ Practise speeches.



## **JUNIOR - SHORT NOTICE DEBATE**

To create the best learning environment for our young debaters in the junior division, the competition is structured so as to build the juniors towards experiencing their first short prep debate in round four. This means that for round one, coaches will receive the topic two weeks prior to the first debate; round two, coaches will receive the topic one week prior to the debate; round three, coaches will receive the topic 48 hours prior to the debate, and then in round four, teams will engage in a short prep debate – receiving the topic one hour prior to the debate. The short notice debate offers students and coaches in the junior division time to learn the basics of debating in a relaxed environment, without the pressure of a clock.

## **WHAT HAPPENS DURING A DEBATE?**

During a debate, the teams sit at the front of the room, opposite each other. The timekeeper and chairperson sit in the middle, between the two teams. The affirmative team sits on the right hand of the chairperson and timekeeper. The negative team sits on the left hand side of the chairperson and timekeeper.

The topic, names of the schools and names of the team members are written on the board.

The **chairperson** introduces the debate and then introduces each speaker. The **timekeeper** is responsible for monitoring the time that each person speaks, sounding warning bells and then final bells at the required times for the particular year level. The time for which each person speaks is written on the board next to their names when they finish speaking.

Discussion between team members during the debate is called **table talk**. It must be conducted in a whisper so as not to disturb the debate. It is acceptable to pass rebuttal points and ideas between team members on rebuttal cards.

At the completion of the debate, the adjudicator presents their adjudication.

# NOTES

