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# **Coach's Guide to Debating**



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# I. INTRODUCTION TO DEBATING

Many people imagine that debating is some kind of shouting and browbeating free-for-all, the sort of thing we might see in question period at the House of Commons. If that were all it was, then the benefits would be difficult to identify.

A debate is a structured argument between two teams of debaters. The resolution to be debated is predetermined and agreed upon by both sides and their coaches.

## Generic Debate Format

There are different types of debate. There are some things, however, that all debate formats have in common:

- 1) There is a *resolution* of policy or value that provides the basic substance of the discussion. The terms of this resolution will be defined by the first speaker of the debate.
- 2) There are two teams representing those in favour of the resolution (*Government* or *Affirmative*) and those against (*Opposition* or *Negative*)
- 3) The Government/Affirmative always has the burden to prove its side.
- 4) The debate closes with final rebuttals on both sides which summarise their respective positions.

<b>Generic Debate Overview</b> (Does not show breaks, cross-examination and discussion.)					
1 <sup>st</sup> Affirmative	1 <sup>st</sup> Negative	2 <sup>nd</sup> Affirmative	2 <sup>nd</sup> Negative	Neg Rebuttal	Aff Rebuttal
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	No new arguments can be introduced .  Explain why your team should win and the other team should lose.  Remind the judges of your arguments.  Tell the judges why they should believe your arguments even after the other team's attack.  Explain why the judges should not listen to the other team.  Review critical evidence.	
<i>Definitions</i>	<i>If necessary, attack definitions</i>	<i>Clash with points made by Negative and rebuild Affirmative case (proof)</i>	<i>Continue attack on Affirmative (proof)</i>		
<i>Explain why current system is bad and needs change (proof)</i>	<i>Clash with needs for change (proof)</i>	<i>Present plan, if not already presented (proof)</i>			
<i>At least introduce the plan or present all of plan (policy debate)</i>	<i>If necessary, present counterplan (policy debate)</i>				
<i>Present reasons why</i>	<i>Clash with reasons Present counter-reasons</i>				

### Sample Debate Formats

These times are samples and may vary from the actual times to be used at tournaments. Check with the organiser for the precise speaker times to be used.

Senior High Parliamentary (normally 2 participants from grades 9-12)	
Speaker	Speech Times
Prime Minister's Introduction	7
First Opposition Speech	7
Second Government Speech	7
Leader of Opposition Speech <i>(The last 3 minutes of this speech will constitute the official rebuttal and must not include any new constructive arguments)</i>	7
Prime Minister's official rebuttal	3

Senior High Cross-Examination (normally 2 participants from grades 9-12)		
Speaker	Speech Times	
	Beginner	Open
First Affirmative/Constructive	6	7
First Affirmative Cross-examined by Second Negative	4	4
First Negative/Constructive	6	7
First Negative Cross-examined by First Affirmative	4	4
Second Affirmative/Constructive	6	7
Second Affirmative Cross-examined by First Negative	4	4
Second Negative/Constructive	6	7
Second Negative Cross-examined by Second Affirmative	4	4
Break	5	5
Rebuttal by First Negative	3	3
Rebuttal by First Affirmative	3	3

<b>Junior High 2 Person Discussion Debate (normally participants from grades 6-9)</b>		
<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Speech Times</b>	
	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Open</b>
First Affirmative/Constructive	5	6
First Negative/Constructive	5	6
Second Affirmative/Constructive	5	6
Second Negative/Constructive	5	6
Discussion Period	10	10
Break	5	5
Rebuttal by First Negative	4	5
Rebuttal by First Affirmative	4	5

Each side is given equal time to prepare its remarks and to deliver them according to a fixed order of alternating speakers. In the process, one or more judges makes notes, comments and scores on a judging sheet, commonly known as a judge's ballot (See Part V).

The debate is presided over and officiated by a speaker or moderator, who makes all rulings about procedure and time. There may or may not be a separate timer of the house (See Part V for sample scripts).

An audience of fellow students, coaches, family and friends may be in attendance, but may not interfere or take part in the competition in any way, except at the invitation of the speaker or moderator.

The thinking skills involved in preparing and executing a debate resemble and therefore reinforce those learned in writing an essay, since in part debating is the organized presentation, with evidence, of a logical argument on a given subject. These skills include analysis of an idea or issue, seeing two (or more) viewpoints in a controversy and developing a reasoned discussion based on points and proofs.

But debating is specifically an oral challenge. Therefore, it also instils confidence, poise and speaking fluency in those who pursue it. The refutation and rebuttal phases demand spontaneous counter-arguing based on careful listening.

Along with these more formal, pedagogical benefits come many enriching personal experiences; debating can be (in fact, should be) fun for all

participants. It can offer new social experiences, friendships and opportunities for travel within the province and sometimes beyond.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federated League of Debaters (NFLD) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Speech and Debate Union (SDU) are volunteers who offer materials, workshops, expertise, leadership and a competitive structure for debating that culminates in a Provincial Seminar in the spring. At that tournament, the top English, French and Bilingual Debaters from across Newfoundland and Labrador compete for a chance to represent their province at the national championships.

## II. COACHING DEBATING

Anyone who teaches can be a good debating coach. The popular conception that debating coaches can only be teachers of English or perhaps History is entirely false. Debating starts with a large measure of common sense, and we all have that (don't we?). The only prerequisites are a genuine enjoyment of working with bright young minds, an interest in ideas and a commitment to effective, lively communication.

As in any new pursuit, it is ideal to start out as an apprentice or assistant to someone with a little experience. Sometimes this can be accomplished by offering to be a judge at a tournament or by taking interested students to observe a tournament. Schools in your area are bound to be busily debating and would be pleased not only to invite you and your debaters to their events, but also to help you get started in your own school. Of course, the NFLD and SDU would be happy to offer its resources and services as well.

One approach to getting novices started in preparing a debate with partners is to have them think in terms of a strategy which allows the team to cover all the key issues of a resolution. One strategy that works well for most resolutions is to examine the topic in terms of *political and economic considerations* and *social and moral considerations*: one partner focuses on the first pair, one on the second. That way they each have broad but significant areas to deal with, but without fear of encroaching on the other partner's territory. Another approach is indicated in the acronymic *SPEEERM ... Social, Political, Economic, Environmental, Educational, Religious and Moral contentions*.

Coaching debating is a time-consuming activity that can sometimes be frustrating; but when you see your young debaters progressing, and having fun in the process, you will know your time and energy have been well invested.

### A. Coaching (Excerpted from *A Debate Coach's Guide*, Colin Castle)

#### 1. *How should I coach debaters for a particular debate?*

You will hear conflicting advice on this point, but you can resolve the conflict by asking another question: Why are the debaters entering the tournament? Because they want to, of course; and because we, as educators, want them to. Debating is education. It helps students to develop personally, to discover that they can do things that other people cannot. It builds self-esteem, cleans up speech and forces students to think precisely and quickly. We could go on, but the point is made. In debating, as in mathematics, music, or mechanics, we are educating students. Math teachers never write their students' tests for them - they

leave that to the student. So the debate coach keeps his or her distance, too. It is a disservice to the students to "do it for them". So, I would suggest this procedure:

- a) A tournament resolution and conditions are received. Call a meeting of all those interested in taking part.
- b) Establish the teams; complete the registration form and mail it.
- c) Hold a brainstorming session on the resolution, and on its possible interpretations and definitions; encourage the debaters to dredge up every possible argument, with or without justification, on both sides of the resolution. Assist by recording ideas on the board or the overhead. You can also enter into the brainstorming, but take care not to dominate it. Encourage the debaters to make their own record of as much material as they want.
- d) Discuss profitable lines of research: "What about finding out how many road accidents happen each year in the U.S.A. and Canada?" Indicate possible sources: "Canada Yearbook, Quick Canadian Facts, Information Please Almanac will be useful - all in the school library."
- e) Keep them on their toes before you have arranged to see them next. "How are you getting on with that affirmative case? What definition did you decide to use?", when you meet a debater by chance in the washroom or in the hall.
- f) Before the tournament, if possible: Listen to each team debate another, preferably twice and taking opposing sides of the resolution. You will not need to criticize logical inconsistencies or weakness in either case - each team will discover these when they face their "in-house" opposition. (However, you can chip away at style, rules, delivery, structure of speeches, missed opportunities, and so on.) With inexperienced debaters, you might suggest areas for further research. Sometimes you will find, to your amazement, that they all missed the point of the resolution and are chatting happily about details. Shine a big light on them; show them the way, but don't do it for them, and choke off those parents; there are many Moms or Dads living vicariously in debating!
- g) Ease off before the tournament. Do not pressure debaters at the last minute. They have either done what they need to do or they have not - it's too late to do much about it. Besides they are probably more interested in what they are going to wear, and what movies are showing in Tootletown.

- h) And when you return to school, after it's all over, hold a postmortem. Help your debaters to benefit from their experiences; discuss the strong and weak points of their recent oppositions, ask them what comments they received from judges. It all adds up to a better performance next time.

## 2. ***What Should Be the Goals of My Coaching?***

You should encourage your students in these directions:

- a) *To achieve an overview of the subject*; details find their place later.
- b) *To be flexible in their response to an opponent's arguments*; to ensure that their constructive speeches are replies - a debate should be a logical conversation in four parts.
- c) *To despise tactics which involve falsification* of facts or a deliberate misquotation of an opponent.

To be modest; success in debating, like nuclear physics, can release huge amounts of potential energy. Bombastic debaters are the bane of organizers' lives. Let us have tournaments without mushroom clouds.

## 3. ***What is Expected of Me by Other Coaches and Organizers?***

It boils down to the SEVEN Musts:

- Must #1:** *Be responsible:* If you enter three teams, arrive with three teams; if you are to bring three judges, bring three judges. If you have to cancel a team, do it as soon as you know. Turning up a team short is unforgivable.
- Must #2:** *Be on time:* For your registration deadline. And for the tournament.
- Must #3:** *Pay up:* Registration fees have to be collected before lunch can be paid for.
- Must #4:** *Volunteer:* To judge, to fetch the lunch, to shovel snow, to unlock the washroom - debate organizers have a right to ask for these and more.

- Must #5:** *Control your debaters:* Most debaters need no "control", but we can all think of some who do. You are responsible for your debaters' manners, punctuality, and appearances.
- Must #6:** *Supervise your students:* You must supervise your debaters at all times or make arrangements for them to be supervised.
- Must #7:** *Have a sense of humour.*

#### 4. ***What About Things to Avoid?***

Some things are **just not done** by debate coaches; they are the 3 GREAT NO-NO'S:

- NO-NO #1:** *Debate coaches do not scout other teams during tournaments.* It goes without saying, of course, that they never "assist" debaters by listening to the arguments presented by teams to be met with later in the day. Don't exclaim; it's been done!
- NO-NO #2:** *Debate coaches do not complain.* Okay, so your team went up against a miserable judge with a hangover. That's the breaks. Next time they will win.
- NO-NO #3:** *Debate coaches NEVER intervene in any way during a debate.* While watching your debaters in action, your lips are sealed and your display of emotion is colder than the Sphinx. Any intervention on your part risks the disqualification of your debaters. And to dispute matters with a judge, whether during the judge's comments or outside the room, is almost as reprehensible. However, if no one in the room has any idea about debate procedure and the debate has ground to a halt, some "traffic" directions on your part would probably be appreciated by everyone. By the same token, if the audience is blatantly unruly, a request for order, first directed to the chairperson, and if necessary the audience at a suitable break in the debate, is probably in order.

### III. ESTABLISHING A DEBATING PROGRAMME

#### A. Getting Started

*Get started as early in the school year as you can manage -- maybe the second week of September. Call an organizing meeting at a time that allows you at least 40 minutes.*

*Make sure that the meeting is announced several times, well in advance. It should be made clear that no experience is needed or expected. No initial commitment need be made; even those who are just curious are very welcome.*

*Support your invitation to the first meeting with personal contacts in your classes, particularly your Level I and II students. Ask other teachers in your department to do the same. Hand written invitations make helpful reminders and show that the club is organized and serious.*

*Let your fellow staff members know that you are planning to start a debating programme. Some may want to join you, or may even have experience. Suggest to them that they urge their more vocal students to come to this initial meeting.*

*Before the first meeting, contact whoever manages your school's money to arrange some financial backing for what you hope to do. This is best done in the previous June, partly to make your staff and administration aware of what your plans are. The figure will depend on your travel needs and the number of tournaments planned for your area, each of which will require registration fees; but \$300.00 is a reasonable amount to ask for in your first year of operation. Your debaters may be expected to raise some or all of that money, but don't let that concern you initially.*

*Be well-organized for the first meeting. Young people often make their judgements and choices on the basis of first impressions, so you want their first impression of debating to be a favourable one.*

*Start by circulating a sign-up sheet of names, homerooms and email addresses.*

*Emphasize that debating is not all serious hard work, although some of that is needed to be a champion. Be sure to let them see right away that this is going to be a student-centred and student-directed club that belongs to them and exists for their learning and enjoyment. To that end, one of the first things to do is to hold a simple election of an executive who will manage the club with your assistance and sponsorship. (See Part IV for officers and duties.)*

*But before you can run a fair election the students need to get to know each other a little. Start by introducing yourself and then ask each student to say*

his/her name, grade level and something else about him/herself. You might even run a very informal debate or discussion on a current school issue, such as locker checks or the wearing of baseball caps, so that the students can get to know each other right away.

*When you do hold your election, you should use a nomination system and arrange that at least one office be held by a Level I or II student, so that the younger ones are and feel represented.*

*The other important thing to do at this first meeting is to find out what is the best day and time to meet each week. Then promise to stick to this and to make reminder announcements. For your second meeting it's appropriate to set up a debate among four of your bolder or more experienced students on a topic of the group's choosing.*

*Encourage the students who attended this first meeting to invite their friends to the next one.*

## B. Benefits of a Debate Program

(Adapted from text by John Baty)

Philosophies of Educational Debate vary greatly. At one end of the spectrum are those who believe the sole intent of participation is winning. At the other are those who view competitiveness as detrimental to learning.

The NFLD and SDU have methodically developed activities which, though recognizing competition as an important teaching tool, have emphasized other educational aspects to a greater extent.

Some of these aspects include:

### 1. ***Developing Critical Thinking Skills***

Some debate events are organized so that students must argue both sides of an issue during the course of the event. This can broaden students' approaches to all issues. Their evaluative and discriminative skills are developed as well.

Development of critical thinking skills has an application outside of debate or school, often providing experienced student debaters with a perspective and problem-solving edge over their peers.

## 2. *Honing Research Skills*

Though it is sometimes assumed that students can adequately learn research skills through normal curricular instruction, class size, time and other limitations make this prospect extremely unlikely.

The debate club or debate option approach allows more flexibility for the one-on-one or small group interaction necessary to develop research skills.

Direct curricular benefit occurs for most participants.

## 3. *Speaking Skills*

Mistakenly, people think of the terms "debate" and "public speaking" as synonymous. The term "public speaking" often assumes style is of greatest importance. In proper debate, content research and logic are of equal (if not greater) importance than the style of public speaking.

The public speaking aspect is, however, a contributory factor to the quality of a debater's skill, and therefore, when taken in its proper perspective, serves an important educational purpose in debate.

## 3. *Stimulating Interest In and Understanding of Issues*

Debate involves the in-depth study of contemporary social, economic and political issues.

## 4. *Bringing the School Recognition*

Though a secondary benefit and not recommended as a sole objective, debate as a viable extra curricular activity casts a positive light on the opportunities offered by a particular school.

*When all these objectives are emphasized in their proper balance, it is found that the developments of an unusually high level of maturity, leadership and camaraderie among participants tends to occur.*

## C. **Organizing a Debate Program**

If the school is so fortunate, a true option program can be established within the curriculum. Students in the option, as well as the teacher, are able to involve themselves outside of class, having had greater time and emphasis within the class.

Because this is not always the case, we should look at the practicalities involved in developing an extra-curricular club.

In most cases, though there are notable exceptions, the debate club rarely gains the degree of notoriety held by a winning sports team within a school. This does not mean, however, that debate cannot become a well-respected and valuable addition to a list of extra-curricular choices that normally emphasizes non-academic pursuits.

Remember, debating is extremely valuable for directly developing skills that complement that curriculum and the personal development of participants.

### ***Developing Debate as a Viable Extra-Curricular Activity***

Coaches will realize that potential debaters may wish to belong to sports teams or other cultural clubs. All these activities will have practice or meeting times that are often inflexible (a missed practice, for example, could mean a person would be dropped from the team).

When faced with these established activities what is a coach to do?

- A) Convince the administration and students that the debating program is high quality, and has something special to offer the individual. The coach must, with true commitment and zeal, spread the word.
- B) Have a plan of meetings, mini-debates and inter-school activities.

### **1. *Creating Student Interest***

As most educators are aware, creating student interest can be difficult at the best of times. There are ways of accomplishing this, however:

#### a) *Handpicking Likely Candidates*

Often the direct approach is the most successful. Most teachers know of student candidates who would find debate suitable to them.

#### b) *Taking Advantage of Club Days*

In most schools, club days are held early in the fall. It is important that, if tables or even presentation times are available, the coach should use these opportunities as fully as possible.

The coach strongly express personal enthusiasm for the debate club, which will help draw students. Noting the objectives of the club, the ongoing character of debating, the opportunities for social interaction and travel, as well as the prospect of high grades, should encourage students to join.

Make sure you have familiarized yourself with NFLD and SDU activities (workshops, seminars, debates and the tournament program) so you can answer questions.

In addition, it is important that potential debaters are aware of a definite and consistent meeting time.

c) *Announcements and Posters*

Though the direct or club day approaches may yield greater results, the P.A. system and posters may do the trick.

Whomever makes the announcements should be in support of and keen about the debate program. The announcements should be succinct and mention some of the more high-profile activities: provincial championships, seminars, debate camps and workshops.

Posters should be designed to attract attention and send a message about the character of the club. Use posters in conjunction with announcements.

**2. *Classroom Integration***

In particular, English and Socials teachers can integrate debate into their classrooms. According to the curricula in each area, the skill areas outlined under **B. Benefits of A Debate Program** usually fall under the objectives of these two subjects. Debate is not mutually exclusive to their domains, however. It is applicable anywhere critical thinking and communication have a place.

If it is compulsory, more students will be directly exposed to debate, allowing greater understanding and the probability of greater interest. If this approach is used, inter-class debates might evolve.

### 3. *Meeting the Club*

On calling the first meeting, the coach shouldn't be discouraged if only a few interested souls turn up. If there are two committed people, there is a team. If there are four debaters, there are two teams. A small number is a blessing in disguise, at first, because the new coach has less to worry about and can concentrate on learning the ropes. Others will join as time goes on. A typical scenario for a committed coach might see only four debaters in the first year, eight in the second, over 12 in the third and so on. This type of growth indicated by patterns seen in other debate programs.

### 4. *Planning*

The coach must assess the following considerations in planning for club involvement:

- a) Provision of materials, lists of texts and handbooks related to debate skills and subject matter. (Information available through NFLD and SDU)
- b) Explanation of one fundamental at a time, using an evolutionary approach to teach debate.
- c) Evaluation with positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.
- d) Provision of a positive yet challenging atmosphere.
- e) Organization and recognition of, and emphasis on, a code of ethics among debaters. (Also applicable to other life situations).
- f) Provision of as many varying opportunities for debate-related activities as is possible. (Youth Parliament, Model U.N., and so on; information is available through the SDU.)

### 5. *Instruction*

In addition to the previously-mentioned planning there are specific methods of instruction that might be attempted:

- a) *Working from the known to the unknown* - find out what members know and develop the program from there.

- b) *Explaining and/or reviewing the basic structure and responsibilities* involved in debate.
- c) *Discussion the value of debate.*
- d) *Viewing videocassettes* of debates.
- e) *Observing an exhibition debate by experienced debaters* from a neighbouring school or university.
- f) *Attending scheduled workshops* where students can have an intensive learning experience in debate.
- g) *Organizing club debates with constructive evaluation* from the coach and student members.

*Note:* Initially, the coach might focus on values issues to allow the debaters to begin debating by expressing and supporting their more personal opinions. (For example: "Be it resolved that boys are better than girls.") Most topics used at events are *propositions of policy* and, though values issues are a good beginning, policy issues develop the desirable skill level more completely. (For example: "Be it resolved that Canada should reinstitute capital punishment.")

- h) *Conducting short one-on-one debates with simple resolutions* (times given could be varied):

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Time</b>
Affirmative Constructive	3 minutes
Negative Constructive and Refutation	5 minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	2 minutes

- i) *Requesting a special workshop* for your own and neighbouring schools, at which NFLD and SDU volunteers could provide you with expertise.
- j) *Attending a debate as observers.*



## **IV. MANAGING A DEBATING PROGRAMME**

To run your programme as a club, you need to organize the election of a basic executive to provide organization and leadership, and in so doing to take work and responsibility off your shoulders. Here are some guidelines for roles and responsibilities for your debate club executive:

### **President:**

- chairs meetings;
- consults with staff coach(es);
- plans impromptu debates;
- receives members' concerns and questions;
- raises issues of club concern;
- helps coach(es) construct tournament teams;
- reminds executive members of their duties.

### **Vice-president:**

- assists president as needed in the above duties;
- takes a turn chairing a meeting.

### **Secretary:**

- issues all notices of meetings;
- keeps and distributes copies of all important mail, especially tournament invitations;
- responds to all mail or memos as directed by the membership;
- makes sure that debating communications are effective.

### **Treasurer:**

- collects and records any money from fundraisers or other sources;
- keeps all monies secure until submitting to the coach.

*Note: One at least of the above offices, excluding President, should be held by a Level I or II student.*

Meet weekly on the same day in the same room, if possible. If no external debating event is coming up, use meetings to hold impromptu, informal debates so the students can get their feet wet, to see how they feel about the activity and to get to know each other. Encourage the members to submit topics to the president for future debate. At an early stage, it's very important to stick to the club principle: allow the executive and membership to run the show, with your support when needed.

You may find the young debaters want a little bit of informal instructional theory. That's when the Newfoundland Federated League of Debaters (NFLD) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Speech and Debate Union (SDU) resources, both print and video, should prove useful. As a teacher you have the judgement and experience to know what's needed, in what quantity and when.

If your region has planned a novice workshop for the fall, that will be the first external event you get notice of. Plan on entering as many club members as are allowed. There won't be anything at stake, and the objective will just be experience and fun. Encourage the hesitant ones with that message. If such a workshop is not taking place in your region, then ask your regional coordinator to introduce one. It's a proven way to start the debating year, but the competitive element must not be prominent.

As each tournament notice arrives, different styles (Parliamentary, Cross-Examination and Impromptu) will need to be introduced, demonstrated and practised. When competition dates get closer, you will want to plan research teams to go to the library and out to the larger community to garner information and opinion to be shared with teammates. This is an important stage in the club's functioning, when a sense of sharing and team cooperation starts to be built. Clear communication of plans at this time is crucial. You should consider, or your president should, holding two or even three meetings a week.

As a school on the mailing list of SDU, you will receive issues of the provincial **SDU eNewsletter**. In it you will find information from the executive, particularly about workshops, new resources and the provincial finals. Your membership in NFLD makes your debaters eligible to go to this seminar. They also have a chance to go on to the National Finals (run by the Canadian Student Debating Federation, the CSDF). You can see how important and valuable your school's membership in NFLD will be, so get in touch with NFLD or SDU for further information.

## V. CHOOSING A TOPIC

If students are going to learn and have fun in a competitive debate, the first thing they need is a good topic to debate. Here are some criteria to use and to teach your debaters to use when formulating a topic for debate:

- that it be of some current interest and significance to young people and to Canadians;
- that it have two opposing sides or points of view, each with identifiable arguments;
- that it not be too narrow or limited in its range or applicability;
- that it be worded in the affirmative;
- that it not deal with sectarian religion or party politics explicitly;
- that it be clear and unambiguous in its wording.

Topics to be used in parliamentary debates are called resolutions or bills, and as such they begin with the conventional opening, *Be It Resolved That, or B.I.R.T.* (For example: *B.I.R.T. the next premier of Quebec be an Anglophone.*) Note the use of the subjunctive mood in the verb form "be", which removes the need for an auxiliary verb like "should" in the resolution. The implication, then, is that the Government must offer a plan for implementation of the bill.

Impromptu debate resolutions are also worded in the parliamentary manner as above, though the tone of the debate and the judging criteria will differ significantly; for example: *B.I.R.T. garbage cans come in different sizes.*

Cross-Examination topics are always framed as questions that can be answered affirmatively or negatively; for example: *Would it serve a useful purpose for the next premier of Quebec to be an Anglophone?*

Debating topics come in three different types or categories:

- **Fact:** A debate about the correctness of an objectively verifiable statement. This type of resolution can only work if the evidence is not clear-cut and conclusive.
- **Value:** An appraisal of the relative merits of one object, idea or action as opposed to another; for example: *B.I.R.T. dogs are better than cats.*

- **Policy:** A dispute which argues that a particular course of action be followed, or not be followed. It starts with the examination of the relative value of the course of action, but must also deal with how the Government plans to carry out their proposal.

**VI. A DEBATING WORKSHEET AND MODEL SPEECH**

**Debater's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Resolution:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Words Defined:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Underlying Issues:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Relevant Resources - Human, Print, Media:**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Arguments on Our Side:**

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**Supporting Facts:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Opposing Arguments Anticipated:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Useful Quotations, One-Liners:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Sample Parliamentary Style Speech by the Prime Minister

(Dan Wilson, Cameron Heights C.I., Kitchener on February 20, 1980)

Topic: *B.I.R.T. Rural Life is Preferable to Urban Life* (a value resolution)

### 1. Introduction

*Mr. or Madame Speaker, honourable judges, patient timekeeper, members of the Queen's Loyal Opposition, learned colleague, distinguished members of the gallery: I rise in support of the resolution that Rural Life is Preferable to Urban Life.*

*This Government's plan of attack will be as follows: As Prime Minister I shall define the topic and deal with the social arguments of this debate. My associate will analyse the physical and economic arguments.*

### 2. Definition

*According to the 1980 voters' guide published by this government, "rural life" is defined as "existence in a community with a population of 5,000 or less." From there, we must deduce that "urban life" is existence in a community with a population of 5,000 or more, in specific and defined limits, that is, a city or town. "Preferable" is defined by the Funk and Wagnell's dictionary as "more desirable".*

*More desirable to whom, Mr. Speaker? Desirable to my colleague and me, less desirable to the opposition? Maybe so, but this government does not want to embark on bickering over personal preference. We wish to debate that: Rural life is preferable to urban life **for the majority of Canadians**. This, we hope, eliminates pointless arguments.*

*So with the resolution in mind and with the Speaker's permission, I will proceed.*

### 3. Development

#### Argument #1

*Mr. Speaker, there is less crime in rural areas. The statistics from Ontario Statistics 1975 show a direct relation between the ratio of a province's rural dwellers to city dwellers, and the*

*crime rate. Ontario, with one person in the country for every five in the city, has a crime rate of 9.11%, whereas New Brunswick with three rural people for every one city person has a crime rate of only 4%. Mr. Speaker, we feel it would be preferable to the majority of Canadians to live in an area with a lower crime rate, and a rural community provides that.*

*Those statistics do raise some questions, however. Why would the crime rate be higher in a city, where people often use every precaution known to man to protect themselves, where the police are often just minutes away, and where people are often close by and could help? Why would the crime rate be lower in a rural community, where police are often miles away, and where it is common to see houses left alone, unlocked and unprotected?*

*Some say because all those devices, and the constant presence of police, create a challenge that criminals want to try to meet. We don't buy this theory. We feel that the fast pace of the city life, with clogged up traffic and the pressures of nine-to-five jobs, build up in a city dweller, and often crime is used as a release valve.*

### **Argument #2**

*This brings up another point. Rural life should be preferable to the majority of Canadians as it is not as pressure filled as urban life is. In a rural community, there are wide open spaces, fresh clean air, and a special harmony not found in the city. It has to be more relaxing, and it is a proven fact that one is less likely to suffer from mental anguish and heart diseases if his lifestyle is tranquil. But is urban life all that pressure filled?*

*Yes, according to the '78-'79 Canadian yearbook, urban centres have an average pressure-related suicide rate of .3% whereas in rural areas, that figure is 0.07%. These statistics prove rural life is not as pressure filled as urban life.*

### **Argument #3**

*Many people agree that there are many tensions in the city, but it has a greater variety of relaxing activities. One can see a movie, go dancing... the list goes on and on. These artificial releases are preferred by some people, as opposed to the out-of-door physical fun of a rural community; but we feel the majority of people would prefer to have a choice between the two, and only rural areas offer this choice.*

*Anyone living in the country can always enjoy physical fun, and city fun lies within reach of a short drive. The city dweller would have to have relations in the country before he could enjoy such a prerogative.*

#### **4. Conclusion**

*Mr. or Madame Speaker, it is for these three reasons:*

- *a lower crime rate*
- *a more relaxing setting*
- *choices of types of relaxation*

*that we feel the majority of Canadians would prefer rural life to urban life. Hence, rural life is definitely preferable to urban life.*



**VII. CRITICIZING A DEBATE****A. Content (Analysis-evidence)**

1. Are the definitions of terms and the interpretation of the resolution sound and responsible?
2. Has the debater perceived the crucial issues which have emerged in the debate? Does the debater follow through on these issues?
3. Does the debater show convincing knowledge of the resolution?
4. Are the contentions supported with sufficient well-documented evidence?
5. Does the debater avoid both unsupported assertions and the continual citation of authorities?

**B. Refutation**

1. Is the refutation clear-cut in its attack on significant points of disagreement between the two teams?
2. Is there a convincing vigour and spontaneity that comes from familiarity with all phases of the question?
3. Is significant new evidence presented in refutation, or is it merely a repetition of evidence presented earlier?

**C. Reasoning**

1. Is the reasoning sound? Is it quick and agile?
2. Are fallacies avoided and detected?
3. Is there evidence of original thinking?

**D. Organization**

1. Is there a clear outline of constructive arguments?
2. Do the members of the team co-operate to present a unified case?
3. Is refutation well organized and easy to follow?

1. Does the speech contain an effective, clear introduction and a summary conclusion?

## B. Persuasiveness

1. Is the debater convincing and effective?
2. Does the debater seem sincere?

## F. Delivery

1. Does the debater speak with a forceful, direct style?
1. Does the debater give the impression of genuineness and sincerity?
2. Does the debater adapt, in manner and content, to opponents and the audience situation?
3. Does the debater introduce variety and humour effectively?
4. Does the debater use good diction and pronounce words correctly? Are slips due to ignorance and carelessness or to extemporaneous speaking?
5. Does the debater seem at home on the platform, in posture and gesture?

An important part of your role as a debating coach is to offer constructive criticism to your debaters. You will also be called upon to judge and criticize other debaters at local tournaments, although you should not have to assess your own debaters at a competition.

Though you may be totally new to debating, do not doubt your ability to do this job well. The skills of analysis and evaluation are things that all teachers come well equipped with. All you have to do is listen closely and follow the flow of the judge's ballot, which will prove very helpful.

A debater who convinces you has debated well; one who does not, has not. Beyond this truism, yes, there is a subjective element in judging, as there is in figure skating and diving competitions. But the

debaters know and accept this aspect of the activity. It's for this reason that in crucial debates two, three, or even four judges may be assigned together.

Debaters, especially novices, do appreciate receiving written feedback, not just as a justification for results and scores, but also as a source of suggestions for improvement in the future. You are not obliged to make an oral report at the end of the debate, though the tournament organizer may invite you to do so in the briefing session.

It is helpful to distinguish between a debater's content and style, though one is bound to be affected by the other, in your view.

The accomplished debater will not likely be an expert on the content of the assigned resolution or question. What he *will* demonstrate is an understanding of the issues underlying the topic. He will also be able to offer factual evidence to support any arguments he makes. By the way, it is NOT the role of the coach to provide debaters with arguments and information in preparation for the debate. If you do this, you deprive the students of the learning and the sense of ownership that makes debating fun.

Over time, it is more possible to effect improvements in a debater's style or delivery. Debate by debate, round by round, you can offer written or spoken suggestions about such matters as construction of a speech, order and length of arguments, posture and body language, voice projection and pace, phrasing and diction. What do you say about these aspects of a student's debate, you ask. Just follow your common sense: what works, what doesn't, and why?

**Note:** Two commonly misunderstood phases of debate are often confused, and even thought to be one and the same; these are refutation and rebuttal. They also are higher level debating skills that young debaters take time to learn, if they even attempt them consciously at all. Both can be taught and both can be learned, with concentrated practice.

Refutation is the attacking of an opponent's arguments and evidence with the intent of strengthening one's own case. Rebuttal, however, is the rebuilding or reinforcing of one's arguments and evidence after the opponents attempt to pull it down in their refutation.

One more thing: reading of a prepared speech is to be discouraged from the outset. It is ineffective communication and shows little or no confidence.



## VIII. ORGANIZING A DEBATING TOURNAMENT

When you agree to host a tournament at your school, remember that despite the work and worries you foresee, staff and students from all participating schools are always ready to help out, if you just ask. When it's all said and done, you and your school will share a splendid sense of accomplishment. Debating is worth the effort!

### Leaders:

Try to identify two or three key helpers (staff and students) so that you will be free to meet people and to attend to their concerns. A small planning committee within your school debating club could take charge of major areas such as JUDGES, SPEAKER/TIMERS, REFRESHMENTS, and so on.

### Topic/Resolution:

A good deal of thought should go into the choice of a topic (cross-examination) or resolution (parliamentary, impromptu). Be sure that your selection is reasonably **current**, **appropriate in difficulty** for the age and experience of the students, **not repetitive** of past tournaments or NFLD events, **balanced** for both sides of the issue and quite **open-ended**.

### Invitation Notice:

Advise NFLD and the SDU, who will be willing and able to help you with any aspects of your event. Take care that all schools are notified of your event at least three weeks ahead of time. Ideally you would have announced your topic or resolution orally at the region's previous tournament.

### Include:

- a detailed time schedule;
- information about directions and parking;
- assembly room information for debaters and judges;
- registration fee (usually \$2.00 to \$3.00 per debater plus any meal cost);
- a clear registration deadline date and time with phone number or email address and name of person to contact or leave a message for.

**Judges:**

Perhaps the biggest challenge in running a tournament is the recruiting of competent judges in sufficient numbers. Anyone is capable of judging, but the trick is convincing people of this fact, getting the time commitment from them and preparing them.

Call on any or all of the following:

- teaching staff, particularly Resource and Enrichment, Administration, Counselling, English, History and Social Sciences;
- parents;
- senior debaters (for junior tournaments);
- retired teachers;
- local Toastmasters' Club;
- graduate debaters;
- spouses of staff;
- local law office.

You will have 12-16 debates (debating rooms) at most, so you want, ideally, 12-16 good, experienced judges or pairs of less confident judges. In a pinch, coaches will judge, but they prefer to hear their students debate.

Designate a central room where judges (and coaches) can retire to have a coffee and a chat; the social element of the activity is very important. This is where the opening briefing of judges can take place.

**Judging Sheets:**

NFLD's judging ballot is simple and workable. Be sure to have plenty of ballots duplicated for each round.

Judges are normally encouraged to write suggestions on the ballot and to offer very brief spoken comments at the end of each debate, but without giving away specific results or scores.

**Rooms:**

It's very important that you clear the use of your school with your principal, and inform the Custodian of your plans and needs. Select rooms that are central, easy to set up for a debate and that can be opened by a regular staff key, if possible.

**Prizes:**

Student debaters like winning every bit as much as athletes and do appreciate receiving a plaque, medallion, ribbon, book (or whatever) as a token of individual or team success. Normally the top two teams and the top three individuals receive some kind of prize. If you wish you can also reward the top debater in each debate of each of the two rounds.

When it comes time to announce winners, start at runners-up and move up to first place finishers.

Ribbons are always most economical. Try to be consistent with this colour scheme:

1st: Red

2nd: Blue

3rd: White

Runner-up/Participant: Green (or host school's colours)

**Refreshments:**

Debaters don't like to just argue and compete. Like us, they like to eat and drink, too!

Allow 1 ½ drinks and 2 edibles per student. The order should include one speaker/timer per team as well. Ordering extra is wise.

The drinks should be a mixture of fruit juices, chocolate and white milk. The edibles can be an assortment of muffins, cookies, or doughnuts (in that order of priority!).

**Budgeting:**

There is no reason why your tournament should cost your school any money. A typical tournament of 16 teams should bring in \$240.00, which should adequately cover the refreshments and awards suggested earlier.

**Officials:**

Each debate (2 vs. 2) requires a speaker/timer. It is reasonable to ask one student to do both jobs, but they should be provided with timer cards numbered 1 through 9, a blank script suitable for the format and a stopwatch if the rooms don't have clocks. Each school can be asked to bring one official speaker/timer for each team entered, but be sure to remind schools of this in your invitation.

**Matchups:**

It's best to wait until the last minute before doing your tournament pairings, because of last minute entries and withdrawals. This will give you valuable flexibility.

Above all, avoid one school debating against itself, and don't let any judge hear the same debaters twice: it's bad for both parties.

Basically, all you need to do is to list all participating schools vertically, separating "A" and 'B' teams from one school by at least two spaces. Then slide them one line for Round One opponents, and slide them again for Round Two opponents. If in doubt, call on one of the many "veteran" coaches around or the coordinator.

**Results:**

Choose a small room near the judges'/coaches' lounge where tabulation will be done. Have at least one teacher/coach in charge and offer a student to help with the calculations, particularly the checking of the addition on the judges' completed ballots.

Have a summary sheet or sheets drawn up that indicate horizontally the schools, the four team members' names, Round One score, totals and final standing.

All addition should be double checked, but time should be kept to a minimum. The coordinator should verify results before any announcements are made.

Perhaps a model debate, speech or performance of some kind could be put on while results are being tallied.

**Registration:**

It's wise to set up a registration table run by a senior student where team fees are collected and where a form is filled out indicating the names of the team members, legibly spelled, and the name or

names of the school's speaker/timers. These sheets then go straight to the tabulation room.

**Directions:**

It's also helpful to both debaters and organizers to put up directional signs at the parking lot entrances and on the doors of the key rooms for officials.

**Judges' Instructions:**

If possible, try to send out a copy of the judging ballot and some instructional materials to any judges you have recruited. Do this at least one week in advance of your tournament. This is good public relations and will improve the confidence and competence of your judges.

**Last Minute Changes in the Draw:**

It's a rare tournament that does not have last minute withdrawals or add-ons. That's why it's best to leave the arranging of the draw to the latest possible time. If possible, replace the withdrawing team or debater with an alternate (or *swing*).

It is also very helpful to have swing debaters from the hosting school at hand to fill in, even if this means that that school cannot enter a team in the first place. Where all else fails, you might combine debaters from two different schools to make up a team, so that individuals can compete even though their schools are not eligible for awards. If that is not feasible, then the school which did not follow your guidelines set out in your invitation notice must bear the consequences.

**Closing:**

This is an exhaustive (and exhausting!) list of things to attend to, and represents an ideal only. Remember, above all, to call on any experienced coach, debater or the NFLD or SDU..

Try to drop in on a debate if you get a moment away from your responsibilities. When you see and hear the young people learning from this wonderful experience, and enjoying it at the same time, you will know that all your effort and trouble have been worthwhile.