

Oxford-style Debate

The Oxford-style debate format offers opposing sides of a topic to intelligently exchange arguments and rebuttals: an “affirmative” team supports convincing arguments to the motion, while a “negative” team refutes the points made by the affirmative team.

Roles

- a) **Chair** runs the proceedings, collects ballots, announces winner
- b) **Affirmative team (A)** defends the motion: burdens of the proof, has to prove all aspects of the case, and cannot win on the inability of the negative side
- c) **Negative team (N)** argues against the motion: burdens of the rebuttal, must either the necessity, beneficiality, and practicality of the affirmative team, and cannot discuss anything the affirmative didn't discuss
- d) Each team chooses a **Captain**
- e) **Audience** asks questions to both sides and votes on the motion

Issues of the debate

- a) Whether or not it is **necessary?** (Necessity)
Discusses the presence or absence of an inherent flaw in the status quo.
- b) Whether or not it is **beneficial?** (Beneficiality)
Discusses the advantages or disadvantages of adopting or rejecting the resolution.
- c) Whether or not it is **practical?** (Practicability)
Discusses the feasibility of the proposition and includes matters of law, clamor, and finance.

Parts of the debate

- a) **Constructive speech:** presentation of each team's arguments and evidence for each aspect of the case
- b) **Interpellation:** opportunity for the opposing debater to ask questions regarding the speech of the speaker
- c) **Rebuttal:** summary and defense of each team's arguments and evidence, to be delivered by the team Captain

Criteria for judging

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| a) Evidence | 25% |
| b) Delivery | 30% |
| c) Interpellation | 30% |
| d) Rebuttal | 15% |

Role of the Moderator

- a) To reveal the issue involve the debate;
- b) To rule on points of clarification about the issues or questions and answers made during the Interpellation; and
- c) To see to it that the debate is orderly and follows the rules of parliamentary procedures.

Role of the Timer

- a) To time the speakers and debaters accurately;
- b) To give the speakers a one-minute warning with the ringing of the bell once before his/her time is up.
- c) To prevent the debaters from exceeding the time allotted to them by ringing the bell twice.

Constructive Speech

Outline of Affirmative Speech

- I. Introduction
- II. State of proposition
 - a. Define the terms
 - b. Give the status quo:
 - i. What is the status quo?
 - ii. What is wrong with it?
 - c. State your stand
- III. Case line
 - a. State all your arguments first
 - b. Go back, then strengthen each one
 - c. Always give transition
- IV. Conclusion

Outline of Negative Speech

- I. Introduction
- II. State of proposition: negate or show clash towards it
- III. Rebut the A-speaker's arguments
- IV. Case line
 - a. State all your arguments first
 - b. Go back, then strengthen each one
 - c. Always give transition
- V. Conclusion

Interpellation

Rules on Interpellation

- a) Questions should primarily focused on arguments developed in the speech of your opponent. However, matters relevant and material to the proposition are admissible.
- b) Questioner and opponent should treat each other with courtesy.
- c) Both speakers stand and face the audience during the question or interpellation period.
- d) Once the questioning has begun, neither the questioner nor his opponent may consult a colleague. Consultation should be done before but as quietly as possible .
- e) Questioners should ask brief and easily understandable question. Answers should equally be brief. Categorical questions answerable by “yes” or “no” are allowed, however, opponent if he/she choose, may qualify his answer “why yes” or “why no.”
- f) Questioner may not cut off a reasonable and qualifying answer, but he may cut off a nervous response with a statement such as a “thank you,” “that is enough information,” “your point is quite clear,” or “I’m satisfied.”
- g) Questioner should not comment on the response of his/her opponent.
- h) Your opponent may refuse to answer ambiguous, irrelevant, or loaded questions by asking the questioner to rephrase or reform his/her question.

Tips on Interpellation

The cross-examination period of a debate is a time when the person who is not going to speak next in the constructives questions the person who has just finished speaking. Consider cross examination an information exchange period—it is not the time to role play lawyer.

Cross examination may serve six objectives:

1. To clarify points
2. To expose errors
3. To obtain admissions
4. To setup arguments
5. To save prep time
6. To show the judge how cool you are so they WANT to vote for you.

Most debaters tend to ignore the value of good cross-examination. Remember, 30% of the entire debate is spent in cross-examination—it should be a meaningful and essential part of the debate. If nothing else, debaters tend to underestimate the importance that cross-examination may have on the judge. Cross-examination will indicate to the judge just how sharp and spontaneous the debaters are. Invisible bias will always occur in a debate round and judges would always like the sharpest team to win. Good, effective cross-examination of the opponents can play an important psychological role in winning the ballot of the judge.

Be dynamic. Have questions and be ready to go, answer questions actively and with confidence whenever you can. The image you project will be very important to the audience/judge. This is the one opportunity the audience/judge has to compare you with opponents side-by-side.

Guidelines for Asking Questions

1. Ask a short Q designed to get a short A
2. Indicate the object of your Q
3. Don't telegraph your argument, don't make it too obvious.
4. Don't ask Q they won't answer properly. “So, we win, right?”
5. Make Q seem important, even if it is just an attempt to clarify.
6. Politeness is a must -- emphasize the difference if they are rude.
7. Approach things from a non-obvious direction. Then trap them.
8. Mark your flow/notes as to what you want to question them about.

9. Avoid open ended Qs unless you are sure they are clueless.
10. Face the judge/audience, not your opponent.
11. CX answers must be integrated into your arguments made during a speech.

Guidelines for Answering Questions:

1. Concise answer.
2. Refer to something you have already said whenever possible. This is safe.
3. Answer based on your position in the debate so far. Keep options open.
4. Don't make promises of what you or your partner will do later.
5. Qualify your answers.
6. Be willing to exchange documents read into the debate.
7. Answer only relevant questions.
8. Address the judge.
9. Try to not answer hypothetical questions. If they demand, say you will give a hypothetical answer.
10. Signal each other, don't tag-team.
11. Don't say "I don't know," say "I am not sure at this time...."

Rebuttals

Rules on Rebuttal Speech

- a) Rebuttal speaker should point out clearly the fallacies committed by his opponent stating clearly what particularly statement or argument constitute said fallacy.
- b) If not familiar with the fallacies of logic, the debater may counter arguments directly by stating what arguments or statement is incorrect or false.

Most debaters, coaches, and judges would agree that rebuttals are the most difficult and yet the most important parts of the debate. Not only is there less time within each speech, but each debater has to sort through all of the issues to determine which ones are the most important ones! What a debater does or does not do in rebuttals will decide who wins the debate. Very few debaters (especially beginners) can hope to extend everything that happened in the constructive speeches. Debaters don't have to do that and just because a team may have dropped a point or an argument is not an automatic reason to vote against that team. What matters is the type of argument that is extended or dropped in rebuttals-this will determine the winner of the round.

Think about these four issues when rebuttals happen:

- a) Which arguments have more weight at the end of the round?
- b) Which outcomes (disads, counterplans) are more likely given lots of internal links?
- c) What about time frame-what happens first?
- d) What about the quality of evidence?

Here are some other helpful hints:

1. Avoid repetition. Don't just repeat your constructive arguments. Beat the other team's arguments and tell the judge why your arguments are better.
2. Avoid passing ships. Don't avoid what the other team said. You must clash directly with their responses.
3. Avoid reading evidence only. You must be explaining and telling the judge why these issues win the debate.
4. Avoid rereading evidence that has already been read in constructives. You can make reference to it by referring to it, but don't re-read it.
5. Avoid "lumping and dumping." Don't try to go for everything. You can't make 12 responses to each argument in a few minutes.
6. Be organized. Don't jump from issue to issue at random. Be specific and logical about winning issues.
7. Don't be a blabbering motormouth. Speak quickly but not beyond your ability. If you speak too fast, you will stumble and not get through as much.
8. Don't whine to the judge about fairness or what the other team might have done that you think is unethical. Make responses and beat them.
9. Don't make new arguments. You can read new evidence but you can't run new disadvantages or topicality responses. You are limiting to extending the positions laid out in the constructive speeches.
10. Use signposting. Make sure the judge knows where you are on the flowsheet. This is not the time to lose the judge on the flow.
11. Use issue packages. Organize your arguments into issue packages. Choose arguments which you want to win. Don't go for everything. Extend those arguments that you need to win.
12. Cross-apply arguments. If you dropped an argument in a prior speech that you think was important don't act like your losing. Cross-apply arguments you made somewhere else in the debate to answer it.

Overview of Debate Proceedings

Role	Time
Chair announces the debate motion and rules, and calls on the debate teams to present their viewpoints	2
Necessity	~15
A1 Constructive speech	5–7
N2 or N3 Interpellation of A1	2
N1 Constructive speech	5–7
A2 or A3 Interpellation of N1	2
Beneficiality	~15
A2 Constructive speech	5–7
N1 or N3 Interpellation of A2	2
N2 Constructive speech	5–7
A1 or A3 Interpellation of N2	2
Practicality	~15
A3 Constructive speech	5–7
N1 or N2 Interpellation of A3	2
N3 Constructive speech	5–7
A1 or A2 Interpellation of N3	2
Audience	15
After the debate teams interventions, the Chair opens the floor for Audience discussion. Each Audience member may speak for a maximum of 1 minute and may make a comment or ask questions to any team member. An individual Audience member may only speak once until all interested participants have spoken.	15
Rebuttals	6
Chair asks N-Captain to briefly sum up his/her main idea	3
Chair asks A-Captain to briefly sum up his/her main idea	3
Balloting & Results	~20
Chair invites the Audience to vote for the debate team which has put forth the most convincing arguments. The vote, collection of paper ballots, and preparation of the justification will last for approximately 15 minutes. Then the Audience delivers to the Chair her justification in written.	15
To conclude the debate, the Chair announces whether the motion is carried (proposers win) or defeated (opposers win) and reads the Audience's justification.	5