

Debate Guidebook For Newcomers

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I. Introduction

What is the purpose of this book?

I remember my first Debate Club meeting three years ago, and my first actual legislative debate league. It was quite terrifying, not only because I was afraid of public speaking, but also because I barely had any clue what was going on. And I was not alone; many of my teammates who were new to debate felt the same way, and we all looked to each other for reassurance. As time went on, debate became much easier and more enjoyable, but we had to figure out a lot about debate on our own. The purpose of this guide, then, is to help new debaters (or maybe even returning debaters) better understand the process of debate and how to enjoy success greater success at debate competition.

II. What is Debate?

Debate club is for YOU – if you aren't confident, you will become confident. If you are confident, show off your skills. If you are knowledgeable, it will help you gain more knowledge. If not, learn about new current events. Debate will teach you how to make eloquent and poignant speeches, help you gain confidence, make you more cognizant of current events, and teach you the principles of good researching. It will also help you become cognizant of current events all around the world, which is immensely useful in social studies and English classes. Your essay writing skills will improve, and you will find many aspects of school much easier after researching and making speeches for debate.

With that being said, there is one crucial fact to remember: The benefit you reap from Debate is proportional to the amount of time and energy and heart you put into your work. Debate is fun activity, but it is also competitive in nature. Do not fool around, because your opponents are there to win. You are simulating actual senators, and the topics you discuss are very serious in nature.

Remember that everyone starts low; do not get discouraged if you aren't the best aren't the best speaker on your first try. Just remember to use your disappointment to fuel your drive to succeed next time around.

Work - While Debate is a fun and rewarding experience, it can only be fun if you take it as seriously as any other activity like a Varsity sport. If you wish to truly succeed, you will have to put up to 10-15 hours a week. You will usually have one week to research 6-12 bills, and each bill will take 1-2 hours to fully understand. You don't have to fully prepare for each and every bill, but the more work you do, the better off you will be.

III. What to do?

There are two main types of debate speech competitions: Legislative, and Policy. This guide was created for Legislative Debate, which is used in the Student Congress, but I will briefly introduce Policy Debate.

Policy Debate places emphasis on speaking very quickly and cramming as much evidence and information as possible in the given time. In policy debate, the whole debate is focused on one issue, and the topic is generally discussed in much greater depth than in Legislative Debate.

In Legislative Debate, students try to emulate actual Congressmen by following parliamentary procedure and debating multiple bills and resolutions. Students author the bills to be discussed beforehand, and the tournament director will compile the bills together to form a bill docket. The student debaters choose which bills to discuss and in what order to discuss them. More emphasis is placed on clear and effective communication to the audience in this kind of debate.

The session starts off with an affirmative speech, called an authorship speech if the author of the bill is speaking or a sponsorship speech if someone from the same school as author is speaking. Note that if the first speaker is not affiliated with the author, the first speech is simply an affirmative speech. A sponsorship or authorship speech takes precedent over a normal affirmative speech. After the affirmative speech, a speech in negation is entertained. The speeches then alternate from affirmation to negation until a motion is made to end debate on the topic. Each speech is anywhere from 0-3 minutes long, and is usually followed by a mandatory one-minute period of cross examination (questioning). The entire process will be discussed in greater depth in the Parliamentary procedure section.

IV. What is a bill?

In this section, we will describe and analyze a bill.

Here is the general format for a bill: Make sure to add line numbers to the bill once you are done making it.

Title of Bill

1. Be it enacted by this Student Congress here assembled:
2. Section I: That concise statement of the new policy to be adopted.
3. Section II: Create subsequent sections (as many as needed) to define any
4. important terms, lay out plans for implementation, and offer other
5. guidelines and requirements.
6. Section III: Designate a government agency or agencies responsible for
7. executing the terms of the bill, indicate how the financial costs of the
8. legislation will be funded, and what penalties (if any) will be imposed for
9. violations.
10. Section IV: Provide a null and void clause.
11. Section V: State the implementation date for the legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Author's Name

Author's School

You may also encounter a resolution. Resolutions are a lot less common, and are not discussed very much in this book, but they are formatted like so:

Title of Resolution 14 pt. Arial Black

Whereas, clearly state the problem your legislation is addressing, and

Whereas, suggest the causes of the problem, and

Whereas, describe the ways in which the problem manifests itself, and

Whereas, explain why the problem is so difficult to solve,

THEREFORE be it resolved by this Student Congress here assembled that [state your recommendation for dealing with the problem].

Respectfully Submitted,

Author's Name

Author's School

****NOTE: Although the resolution format shown here uses a four "whereas clause" format, you may choose to have as many whereas clauses as you want (the minimum number of clauses needed is two). The content of each clause is your choice; you are not required to follow the above structure.****

Now here's a sample bill:

The Language Unity Act of 2008

1. Be it enacted by this Congress here assembled that:
2. **Section I:** The official language of the United States of America is now declared
3. English.
4. **Section II:** All government programs, policies, laws, public proceedings and
5. regulations shall be in English only. Any and all legal aliens and immigrants must take
6. and pass an English language course in order to become a naturalized U.S. citizen,
7. which will be paid for by the applicant. If the alien does not pass the English language
8. course then he/she can try again after 3 months and will not be able to take the tests
9. until the speaking course is passed.
10. **Section III:** The Department of Immigration and Naturalization will be executing this
11. bill along with any subsequent responsibilities it may require. Any government
12. agency failing to comply will be cut off from their funding by the Federal government
13. until further notice. Funding shall be provided the aforementioned department.
14. **Section IV:** All other laws conflicting with or pertaining to this law are now null and
15. void.
16. **Section V:** This legislation will be implemented on January 1, 2009

Respectfully Submitted,

Forest Hills Northern High School

Anonymous

****Note:** This bill has been edited from the original wording.

Section Breakdown

Title – Language Unity Act of 2008. This title is concise, and it explains what the goal of the bill is in a very few words. A date is usually not necessary in the title.

Section I – This is the one sentence summary of your bill. It should be concise but clear. Any ambiguities or complications can be explained in the next section.

Section II – Again, this section reiterates Section I and expands on it for clarification. In this bill, Section II adds information about the execution of this bill with regards to immigrants. The author chose not to include this information in Section I because it is not the main point of the bill and in an effort to make Section I as concise as possible.

Section III – This section explains *how* the bill shall be implemented. It gives the name of the department in charge of executing the bill, and provides provisions for funding. In this case, the department in charge of executing the bill will also provide funding. Beware, this is not always the case.

Section IV/V – These two sections are pretty standard no matter what the bill is about. A null and void clause, followed by a date of implementation.

V. The Three Minute Speech

As mentioned earlier, in legislative debate, you will be expected to deliver a 3 minute speech. A majority of your points in Legislative Debate come from your speech. I would advise against typing up whole speech because your delivery will be much better if you speak without looking at your paper. I personally recommend writing a few bullet points for each of your main arguments, along with evidence, and making up your speech while you are up at the podium. This will definitely take some time and practice, but most advanced debaters use this method rather than write out a whole speech.

General Format

The general format of a complete, high-scoring speech is as follows:

Introduction – States the main purpose of the bill and your position on it, as well as a thesis statement” which outlines the 2/3/4 main points you will speak about. (15-20 seconds)

Point 1/2/3/4 – For each argument, if statistics are used, make sure to cite them. If not, judges will assume that the statistics were either made up or not thoroughly researched. In most cases, you should have at least two statistics in your speech, though there are exceptions to this rule. (Leave about 40 seconds for the clash and conclusion. This section should total to about 2 minutes)

Clash – This is addressing the other side of an argument, and is often the most missed category in a speech. To receive high points on this section, dedicate around 30 seconds of your speech to refute counterarguments either made prior to your speech, or arguments you believe the other side will make later on. By doing so, you show the judges that you are not making a one-sided decision, and you have thought your decision through.

Conclusion – Restate your “thesis statement” which states your 2/3/4 main points and your position on the bill.

Note – Judges will mark you down if you go over time, so make sure you are aware of how much time you have left. However, if you do finish in around 2:50-3:00, the judges will give you a high score because you wisely and completely used your time. Also remember that if you make more than one speech, your scores will be AVERAGED out

for each speech you make. This means that if you feel like you made a really good speech, don't make another one unless it will be better! On the flip side, you can redeem a poor speech with a really good second speech. Don't make more than two speeches though, give other people a chance.

Types of Speeches

Authorship – Reserved for the author of the bill being discussed. First affirmative speech, and the author is guaranteed to make a speech.

Sponsorship – If you are from the SAME SCHOOL as the author, and the author is not present, you may stand up for the sponsorship. This is also a guaranteed speech, and it is the first affirmation speech if the author is not present.

Affirmation – A speech in favor of the bill. Starts each cycle.

Negation – Entertained after every affirmative speech. At the end of the negation speech, a cycle is complete and a motion may be made to end debate on a bill.

VI. How to deliver an effective speech

The 4 C's to a successful speech:

Confidence - As you walk up to the podium and prepare to deliver your speech, make sure to take a deep breath and take a second to calm down and feel confident. This will take practice, but during your speech, don't stutter, and AVOID using time-fillers such as "umm" or "like."

Clarity – Make sure your logical flow is clear and easy to follow. You may have a great argument, but if the judge misses it or gets bored of your speech, she might miss it and you will not receive the score you deserved.

Conviction – Even if deep down inside, you don't believe in what you are saying, you have to remember that you are simulating a senator who is supposed to believe strongly in what he is saying. Make sure when people ask you questions, you answer with confidence and stick to your point. And during your speech, though you should briefly address counterarguments, DO NOT waiver in your opinion, or seem unsure of your stance on an issue. The stronger your convictions *seem to be* to the judge, the higher score your speech will be awarded.

Content – This is probably the most crucial component of your speech, and you can be fully in control of it. Even if you didn't prepare a verbatim speech beforehand, you should make sure that you always have 2-3 statistics connecting to at least 2-3 main points/facets of your argument.

Eye Contact:

Proper eye contact exhibits confidence and creates a stronger connection between you and your audience. There are two main techniques/patterns that experienced debaters seem to use to maintain eye contact with their audience and judges:

1. Start from the front leftmost person, go all the way to the back of the row, and continue making eye contact with a snake pattern until you reach the top or bottom of the rightmost row.
2. Instead of going in a pattern, maintain eye contact with each person in a random order for a few seconds. This technique might be more effective, but it should only be used by more experienced debaters who have practiced making stronger eye contact with the audience.

If you are nervous about making direct eye contact with the audience, just look right above their eyes, to the top of their heads. It will seem like you are making eye contact with them, and they won't be able to intimidate you.

VII. The Rubric & Scoring:

SAMPLE RUBRIC ON NEXT PAGE

There are five categories your speech will be graded on: hahsaj, ahajaba, ahahhh. You will be given a score from 1-5 for each category, for a grand total of 5-25 points per speech.

Reasoning - Reasoning is the logic behind the arguments you are making. Judges try not to be biased, so as long as your reasoning is logical and makes sense, you will score highly on this section.

Evidence – This is quality and quantity of evidence used in your piece. Avoid less reputable sources like “ScienceBlog” or a random website made by an individual. University professors and high quality newspapers are usually the best source. Two things to be aware of:

1. Make sure to cite all your sources. If you give a statistic or use a direct quote without properly giving credit to the author, it is considered plagiarism and you will be punished.
2. If you make up a source because you don't know where your evidence came from, the judges will notice and mark you down. **DO NOT MAKE UP STATISTICS.** This is simply unfair and not in the spirit of legislative debate. You will be heavily penalized if judges find out your statistics are made up.

Delivery – Here you are graded on how well you vocalize your speech. Speaking techniques are covered in greater depth in the previous section. Remember, the more of your speech you can memorize, and the more confident you look and sound, the higher your score will be.

Organization – This section is scored on how well your speech flows and how it is arranged. The best method to score high on organization is to clearly indicate how your speech will be structured in the beginning of your speech, and then to follow the stated structure. For example:

Paragraph 1 – I urge you to vote in _____ of this bill because of _____, _____, and _____.

Paragraph 2, 3, 4 – This bill is _____ because of _____(stated earlier).

Paragraph 5 – Because of _____, _____, _____, I urge you to vote in _____ of this bill.

This way, the judges and senators will easily be able to follow you and understand your intentions.

Clash – Clash is addressing the other side of an argument. This is often the most missed category in a speech. To receive high points on this section, dedicate around 30 seconds of your speech to refute counterarguments either made prior to your speech, or arguments you believe the other side will make later on. By doing so, you show the judges that you are not making a one-sided decision, and you have thought your decision through.

There is one more category you will receive points for: Overall impact. Again, you will receive a score of 1-5. This section is often the easiest to score high on.

Overall Impact – This section judges your professionalism and adherence to parliamentary procedures. To score high on this section, do not behave inappropriately, ask relevant questions, make motions, suggest amendments.

Wayne-Oakland LD - Legislative Debate Speaker Score Sheet

School: NOVI Name: _____

Seat: _____ Session: I II Super Semi-Final Final

Scoring Key: 1-poor 2-fair 3-average 4-Excellent 5-Superior

Bill / Res. : Aff. / Neg. Bill / Res. : Aff. / Neg.

Reasoning	1	2	3	4	5	Reasoning	1	2	3	4	5
Evidence	1	2	3	4	5	Evidence	1	2	3	4	5
Delivery	1	2	3	4	5	Delivery	1	2	3	4	5
Organization	1	2	3	4	5	Organization	1	2	3	4	5
Clash	1	2	3	4	5	Clash	1	2	3	4	5

Speech 1: _____ Speech 2: _____ Speech Avg. = _____

Overall Impact (Parliamentary process, professionalism) 1 2 3 4 5 = _____

Total score will = the ranking (30 = 1, etc.) Total Score = Speech Avg. + Impact = _____

Where total scores are tied, the judge's discretion will decide the rank. **Rank = _____

Comments:

- ____ Reflects speaker has listened to others
- ____ Speaker is non-responsive to issues raised during debate
- ____ Clearly organized; purpose and focus are obvious
- ____ Speech lacks goal and/or structure
- ____ Delivery is clear and persuasive
- ____ Delivery problems detract from speech
- ____ Active participation and engagement thru entire debate
- ____ Not active participant
- ____ Polite during session and while others speak
- ____ Rude and/or inattentive
- ____ Understands and follows parliamentary procedure
- ____ Does not know or fails to follow parliamentary procedure
- ____ Evidence qualified, unbiased, warranted
- ____ Evidence absent, unqualified, biased, conclusive

Cross-Examination Questions

- ____ Questions are challenging and have a purpose
- ____ Questions did not clash with the speaker's point of view
- ____ Questions were courteous and respectful
- ____ Questions were discourteous and disrespectful
- ____ Sufficiently answers questions from the assembly

Constructive Comments:

Judge: _____ School: _____

VIII. Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure (affectionately known as “parli-pro”) is the body of rules, ethics, and customs governing meetings and other operations of clubs, organizations, and legislative bodies. It is governed by Robert’s Rules of Order, the chief procedural book used by the Congress and student Congress.

Presiding Officer (PO)

Each chamber will mostly be comprised of student debaters, but one student in each chamber will be the presiding officer (PO). The PO is essentially the moderator of the chamber. He will choose who gets to speak, when he or she will speak, time the speaker, choose who gets to ask questions, and most importantly, he will maintain order and decorum in the chamber by following parliamentary procedure. The PO is elected by the members of the chamber before debate begins. To run for PO, you must be nominated by someone else in your chamber.

Cross Examination (Cross Ex)

The time for cross examination (cross ex) varies, but there is usually one minute of mandatory cross examination for each speaker. During cross ex, you may ask questions for clarification purposes, or to learn about the source of statistics and information, but DO NOT try to make a point that could be used to make a speech in your question. Avoid questions like “Are you aware that...?” as these reflect poorly on you, and they are a waste of time. Keep questions and answer as short as possible.

Motions

Here are a few of the main motions you should be aware of. To make a motion, you must begin with “Motion to _____”

Open Debate – Starts the debate. It’s the first motion passed. Simple majority required.

Division – Requires all debaters in the chamber to stand up for their vote on a particular motion.

Open/Discuss a bill – Start’s debate on a bill. Simple majority required.

Move to previous question – Ends debate on the current bill.

Suspend the rules – If you want to deviate from the normal order or cycle of debate. Requires a 2/3 majority.

Extend Cross Ex by _____ - Increase cross examination by a given time.

Adjourn – To end debate, and end the session.

Parliamentary procedure is complicated at first, but if you pay attention to how your chamber runs, you grasp it very quickly.

IX. Tricks of the trade

Here are some tips and tricks that I couldn't add anywhere else:

Placard – Fold an 8.5x11 sheet of paper three times. Write your last name across once side and make sure this placard is stable. Whenever you debate, make sure to put this placard on your desk in a place where both the PO and the judge(s) can see it.

PO – If you want to run for PO, make sure you ask chamber members if they will vote for you BEFORE running. Extensive campaigning is not required, but you should still be acquainted with the other members of your chamber. If you're not PO, make sure you know how the PO's recency (who is allowed to speak first) works.

Politics - And finally, debate is in many ways a political procedure. Make alliances with other debaters in other schools if you want to open up a bill, and make sure you are not behind in chamber politics.

X. Conclusion

This is all I have for now. Hopefully you can learn something or reflect on what I have written. I thank you for taking the time to read this guidebook and showing initiative to become a more impressive debater. There are many debaters who are much better speakers and researchers than I am. I simply have had the fortune of observing all sorts of speakers for four years. Remember, debate is a continuous learning experience. I still don't know everything there is to know about debate, and some rules change every year. The **most important** skill in debate is **observation** power. See what people are doing right and wrong, listen to how they speak, and figure out what techniques work best for you.