

King Edward VI Handsworth Debate Society

Debating Handbook 2019-2020

Name: _____

Form: _____

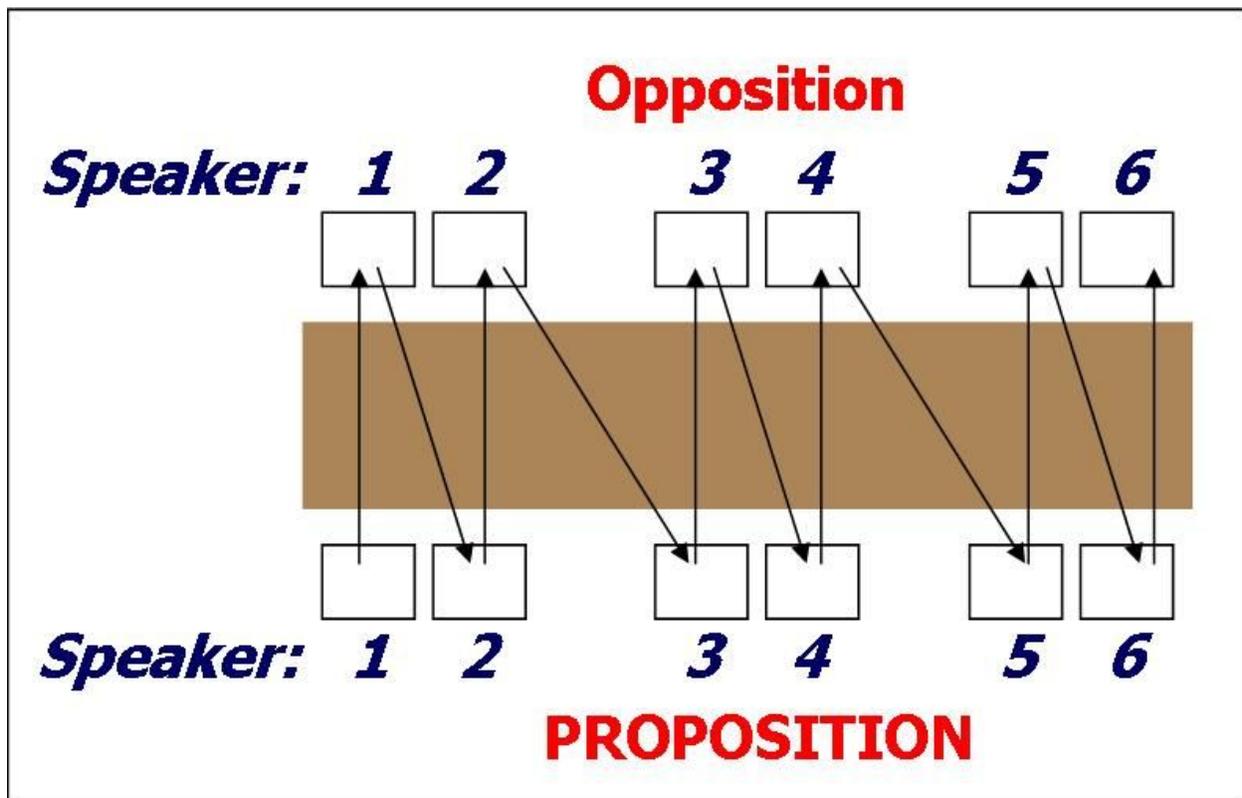


What is debating?

The most basic definition of debating is that it is the statement of contrasting arguments and ideas. The type of debating that is practiced in universities is loosely based around the conventions of the Houses of Parliament and is referred to as 'British Parliamentary', usually abbreviated to 'BP'.

What is the structure of a British Parliamentary debate?

There are two sides in British Parliamentary debate, the proposition and the opposition. The participants in the debate speak in turn: 1st proposition speaker, then 1st opposition speaker, and so on. Each speaker makes one speech only. There can be two, three or four speakers per side in BP debates.



What is the format of speeches?

Speeches are the core of debating. They are either of 5 minutes or 7 minutes in length in the formal setting of a debate, but in the training context some speaking exercises will be shorter in length. Your teacher will inform you of the length of speech that is required in good time before you are expected to speak.

All speeches should have a beginning, middle and an end; or, if you prefer, introduction, exposition and conclusion. Most speeches have a three-section structure. This might consist of three arguments, three themes, or three headings, under which the substantive matter of the speech is presented.

What subjects are debated?

Any subject may be debated. Speakers are expected to argue whichever side of a debate they may find themselves in. Sometimes this means that you will have to argue something that you do not agree with. You should be prepared to do this. Similarly, you should not assume that other speakers in the debate are arguing things that they believe in. They, like you, are simply advocates for the side that they find themselves representing.

Top Debating Tips!

In every debate there is a motion: a statement, idea or policy that is disputed and framed within the prefix 'This House'. Usually, the motion is either a policy which changes the status quo (e.g. This House Would Provide All Police Officers With Firearms) or a statement, the truth or falsehood of which is examined in the debate (e.g. This House Regrets the Decline of Marxism in Western Liberal Democracies). There are two sides to the debate: the government and the opposition. The government, also known as the proposition, supports the motion whilst the opposition opposes it. After the debate, the judges will decide which debaters were most persuasive.

What makes a good debater?

Typically, judges decide how persuasive debaters have been through three key criteria:

Content: What we say and the arguments and examples we use.

Style: How we say it and the language and voice we use.

Strategy: How well we engage with the topic, respond to other people's arguments and structure what we say.

How is the debate structured?

There are many different formats of debate, each with their own rules. The format we use in competitive debating is called British Parliamentary, as it resembles a debate in the British Parliament.

Points of Information are direct interjections made during speeches by other speakers in the debate.

They are subject to the following rules:

>You may only offer points of information to the side opposite to you in the debate (i.e., you are not allowed to offer points of information to your own side of the debate).

>You may only offer points during unprotected time.

>To offer a point of information you must stand up and indicate that you wish to give a point of information by stating “On a point of information” or simply “Information”.

>If the principal speaker declines your point of information you must re-take your seat and you may not give a point at that time.

>Points of information should last no more than fifteen (15) seconds and ideally should be as short as possible.

If you are the principal speaker it is expected that you will take some but not all points of information that are offered to you. As a rule of thumb in a five-minute speech, you should always take at least one and never take more than two. In a seven-minute speech you should you should always take at least two and never take more than three.

When to use points of information

Points of information are crucial to gaining ascendancy in a debate. If you do not deal with them well in your own speech, you will look unconvincing, and if you do not offer good points of information you will look weak. A good point of information is short, succinct and puts the main speaker off balance. You should try to offer points that will expose the other side of the debate's weaknesses.

Types of point of information

Clarification – if what a speaker is saying is not clear, or the full scope of their argument is not revealed, ask for clarification

Factual objection – if a speaker uses a fact that is erroneous, or you can offer a competing fact that undermines the speaker's example, challenge it

Argumentative objection – offering a counter-argument to a point that the speaker is making creates difficulties for that speaker. If they do not respond well they will look weak (be careful though, because you only have a few seconds!)

Argumentative challenge – if you can offer an argument for your side that has not been made yet it will create difficulties for the speaker. If your team is speaking second on either side this is a good way of pre-empting what the first team might say – and gives you the credit for saying it first! However, remember that the 1st team set the theme of that side of the house – do not contradict them.

Remember also that you are competing against them, so do not help them by offering too many new arguments.

A Joke – a well timed and witty line relevant to what the speaker is saying can throw them off balance and make you look good

Some reminders/ debate society rules

1. Within a debate speakers should always be courteous and heckling is frowned upon.
2. At the end of a debate the conflict between speakers should be forgotten.
3. Speakers should take care to note that within debating there is no assumption of a particular world-view: you should be prepared to explain and justify through logic and argument everything that you include in a speech.
4. You should ensure that students get a fair chance to speak. This may mean that one week, you are part of the judging panel.
5. You should ensure that you are respectful to others at all times.

School Competitions

Throughout the year, the school will enter a series of external competitions and there will be some opportunities to debate through the MAT. You should check Google Classroom and your emails regularly to see when opportunities present themselves. In order to take part in the team, you will need to audition.

The instructions for the audition will be made clear and it is imperative that you stick to the remit given.

Debate Society Meetings

The Junior Debate Society (KS3) will meet every week (the day will be decided when the extra-curricular timetable has been released). The Senior Debate Society (KS4 and 5) will also meet weekly with Mrs McKee. The topics will be decided by the Debate Committee, in conversation with your teachers. These will usually be released prior to the meeting, so that students have time to prepare arguments/ complete necessary research.

Loyalty

We expect regular attendance from all members of the society, regardless of whether they are debating that week or not. Students will have a Debate Society Loyalty Card which is stamped each week to indicate their attendance. Cards must be stamped during the session and can not be stamped retrospectively.

When you achieve 20 stamps you are eligible to collect a gift to celebrate your commitment.

When you achieve 30 stamps you will receive the King Edward VI Handsworth Debating Seal of Approval, which will be presented by the Headmistress.

Debate Society Committee* Meetings

The Junior Debate Society committee will meet once every half term to decide debate topics, discuss progress and to ensure that all is running smoothly. These will be included on the Debate Society calendar (attached). Committee members should be the only ones to attend these meetings.

***Students will need to apply for a place in the Debate Society Committee.**

The Junior Debate Committee 2019-20

President 2019-20:

Vice President 2019-20:

Secretary 2019-20:

Roles and Responsibilities

President and Vice President

The President is the leader of the Debate Society, who coordinates and oversees all of the society's activity. The President will need to provide support, advice and guidance to the other committee members throughout the academic year.

Probably the most challenging role on the committee, you'll need experience of what the society does, and a strong belief in the aims of the society.

Personal skills checklist:

1. Communication
2. Dedication/Commitment

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3. People Management
 4. Motivating volunteers
 5. Organisation
 6. Delegation

Key Responsibilities

- 1) Meet regularly with teacher to signal the direction of the society
- 2) Calling and chairing meetings making sure everything is covered and no-one dominates
- 3) Delegating tasks – you shouldn't do everything yourself!
- 4) Understanding the broader picture keeping the aims of the society in mind at all times
- 5) Being a spokesperson/figurehead and represent your society at public events (such as assemblies/ Open Evenings)
- 6) Maintaining committee enthusiasm – if you're not passionate, no-one else will be
- 7) Read society emails and disseminate messages to the group.

Secretary

The Secretary is the backbone of the organisation of any society and ensures that things run smoothly. Emails need to be written, rooms need to be booked, documents are filled out and above all you need to communicate what's going on to your members so they stay interested and stay involved.

Personal skills required:

1. Communication
2. Dedication/Commitment
3. Organisation and Time Management

Key Responsibilities

1. Taking care of society admin - fill out all forms and return to teacher/ President/ VP
2. Arrange meetings and book rooms or venues
3. Creating an agenda and keeping minutes of meetings as necessary
4. Communicate regularly with your members, let them know what's going on
5. Maintain up to date membership/ attendance records via Google Sheets
6. Be aware of key dates for your society throughout the year
7. Read society emails
8. Publicise your society through Google Classroom and other advertisements.

