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An Introduction to Debating

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from the

**Toronto
Debating
Society**

www.debating.ca

An Introduction to Debating

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What is the Toronto Debating Society?

The Toronto Debating Society is a non-profit organization which encourages all levels of speakers from novice to professional, to speak and debate on anything from the topical to the arcane, without prejudice, simply to improve speaking skills and have fun.

Our mandate is to present activities intended to interest anyone who wishes to learn or improve their public speaking abilities. The Society recognises that the group is the members, and will always be able to change direction as the Society grows and members redefine the group's objectives.

History

In the fall of 1995 Jim Smith, David Murray and Peter Goldthorpe formed what is now the Toronto Debating Society. From the outset, people with all levels of ability and experience were welcomed, but the founding members wondered if there was enough interest in the community for a debating and speech-making club. The club promotion included:

“Ever felt you would like to polish your ability to speak up in a forum, make a point at a public meeting, or simply need an excuse to talk? Then this may well be for you.”

The vision and persistence of the core members created The Swansea Debating and Public Speaking Society. The inaugural meeting of the Swansea Debating Club, was held in the Hague Room at the Swansea Town Hall on October 18, 1995. Following a welcome by Jim Smith, the founding president, the inaugural meeting included a presentation by David Murray on “Speech Making and Speaking Extemporaneously”. At an early planning meeting, David Murray reached into his wallet to become the first paid up member.

The inaugural debate, chaired by David Murray, was held on November 8th 1995, with the motion: “This House resolves Remembrance Day should be forgotten.” Initially the founders imagined meeting at the town hall six - 12 times a year. Meetings soon grew to twice a month.

Founder and first President, Jim Smith, (1995-96) led the establishment of the Swansea Debating and Public Speaking Society with seven founding members. In the following years Peter Goldthorpe (1996-97), Francois Picotte (1997-98) and Eileen McKee (1998-99), were presidents. In 1998-9 Membership reached 25 with 15 to 18 people attending most meetings. Dean Girard carried the gavel from 1999-2001. Club activities were suspended in early 2001 after active membership fell to five or six people. Mike Kobzar (2001-02) reactivated the club with an intense recruitment campaign. The club was renamed the Toronto Debating Society in 2001. The club remained a non-profit organization run by volunteer members, for members. In addition to the twice a month meetings, the Toronto Debating Society went on the road in 2001, with debates at Rotary and Toastmasters Club.

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The World University Debating Championships that were held at University of Toronto, in 2001, served as model for a change of rules at Toronto Debating Society, to allow points of information in spring 2002. Other milestones, have been the introduction of formal adjudication in 1998, the use of video to assist members to improve style and technique and in 1999, impromptu debates, which are still held from time to time, were first introduced. A CITY TV debate and a write up of the club by *National Post* columnist, Joe Fiorito, helped to increase awareness of the club. In 2002, Jim Smith, provided the initiative and resources to launch the important public face for the club, the Toronto Debating Society website, at www.debating.ca. Supporting the increased public prominence, Mike Kobzar secured the donated expertise to design the new Toronto Debating Society logo.

Members and past members attest to the value of the experience gained from club participation for social discussions, business meetings, negotiating and presentations. For those interested in improving their ability, the development of the adjudication process for each debate, as well as comments from the speaker and from members of the audience, is also helpful. Several times a year short education workshops form part of the meeting. From its inception, the club has welcomed new ideas and innovation.

In 1998/9 there were 25 members, with a fairly regular turn out of 15 – 18 per evening. In 2001-2002 there were 20 members with 8 – 18 people attending each meeting. In 2003 there have been 23 lively and active participants at some meetings. Now, as in the past, there are several new faces at each event and newcomers are always welcome. Members and visitors pursue all kinds of interests, and follow many types of volunteer activities, careers and professions. The Toronto Debating Society continues to aim to attract all people who are interested in debating and public speaking.

Why debate?

The overall objective of the Society is to provide entertainment and intellectual stimulation through debate. To this end, the debates are organized to help members improve their ability to construct, understand and refute arguments and, more generally, "think on their feet".

Basic principles

1. All issues, regardless of how abstract or whimsical they may be, can be debated.
2. A skilled debater should be willing and able to argue either side in a debate.
3. The essence of debate lies in opposition. If two sides simply talk past each other with eloquent or entertaining speeches, a debate has not occurred.

Presenting a case

In general, the 1st speakers for the Ayes and Noes introduce the arguments and the 2nd speakers elaborate by providing additional evidence. When the 2nd speakers are presenting their summary and Final Rebuttal, they must not introduce new arguments. The 2nd speakers must also be careful not to contradict the 1st Speakers on their side.

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Burden of proof

The Ayes must prove their case. It is not necessary for the Noes to prove their case, all they need do is disprove the case of the Ayes.

Points of order and personal privilege

A speaker may interrupt a speech if he or she believes the speaker holding the floor has not followed the rules (point of order) or has misquoted or misrepresented a speaker (point of personal privilege).

Membership Fee

The Membership fee has been set at a minimum to cover costs. It is currently \$50 per season. The majority of the membership fee covers room rental.

From January, memberships are prorated. Please speak to the treasurer for details.

Mentoring Program

For interested members who are preparing to debate, a mentor (an additional resource for a new member) can be provided.

Debating society executive committee

The Committee is elected annually at the annual general meeting by majority vote. Members of the executive include:

President

- ensure that the Society remains focused on the pursuit of its goals;
- preside over all meetings of the Committee;
- report to the Committee on all aspects of the Society's aims; and
- invite a member to chair meetings.
- as necessary from time to time, to adjust the length of the speeches in the debates.

Vice President

- Acts in a presidential capacity whenever the President is unavailable
- assigns a person to handle topics and speaking activities for upcoming meetings in consultation with the members;
- assist the President in selecting Speakers for a debate;
- organises additional events and assists the president with new directions for the club;
- sit as a member of the Committee.

Secretary

- call meetings as required and set the agenda;
- call Members prior to a meeting to confirm attendance;

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- write minutes for each meeting; and
- sit as a member of the Committee;

Treasurer

- draw up a budget, including setting fees, in consultation with the Committee to be approved by the Members;
- collect fees;
- oversee expenditures for the budget;
- sit as a member of the Committee

Media Secretary

- initiates membership drives in consultation with the other committee members
- meets with club attendees to answer any questions or queries they may have
- Assist potential members with signing up and collects fees
- arrange publicity for debates
- sit as a member of the Committee.

Membership Secretary

????????????????????Explanation needed

Education Secretary

????????????????????Explanation needed

2003 executive

Position	Name	Contact	Phone#
President	Jim Corston	president@debating.ca	416 488-9457
Vice President	Gerry Lawrence	vp@debating.ca	
Membership	Michael Kobzar	members@debating.ca	416 242 7909
Education	Luigi Benneton	educate@debating.ca	
Media and Publicity	Jim Smith	media@debating.ca	416 766-2820
Treasurer	Peter Goldthorpe	finance@debating.ca	
Organiser	Fiona Campbell	organise@debating.ca	

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Meeting Structure

Each meeting will typically consist of three parts, but the president may vary this format if required.

Business

The President will report on business arising from the previous meeting(s) and deal with new business including confirmation of topics and speakers for subsequent meetings. On the matter of topics, the President will propose a topic from a list prepared by the Program Organizer and modify the wording of the resolution based on discussion with the Members. Topics should be agreed upon for at least two meetings in advance if possible.

Informal Speaking Exercises

The Program Organizer will describe an informal speaking exercise to involve all the Members. These exercises will typically involve brief (one minute) impromptu speaking by each member of the attendees.

Additional Exercises/ Information Exchange

In addition to the initial speaking exercise, the President may also decide to have an additional exercise. This can take any format but will typically be some form of exercise for individual or group public speaking, debating or for fast responses training. This will typically last 5 – 15 minutes.

Formal Debate

Adjudication

Other Business

Adjournment

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An overview of debating

Different debating organizations follow different conventions. This section outlines the rules debaters follow in the Toronto Debating Club.

Toronto Debating Society format

The Speaker will initiate the debate by briefly reviewing the rules of the debate and the exact wording of the motion. The Speakers will then be invited by the Speaker to speak for or against the motion in the following order and for the allotted time:

Prime Minister	7 Minutes
Leader of the Opposition	7 Minutes
First minister for the Government	5 Minutes
Minister of the Opposition	5 Minutes

The Speaker will then open the motion to the floor and invite Members to speak for and against the motion in order. Cross benches speakers may be taken after these. There is no time allocation for Members speaking from the floor but they are expected to be concise and address a specific point without deviating or repeating themselves.

Following speeches from the floor, the speakers are called to sum in reverse order:

Minister of the Opposition	2 Minutes
First Minister for the Government	2 Minutes

Interjections in the debate

Only one Member may speak at a time and this is the Member recognized by the Speaker. There are, however, two ways in which other Members may interrupt. These are Points of Order and Heckles.

The vote

Immediately after the summations of the two Speakers, the Speaker explains how the vote will be conducted, asks the Members for their votes -- for, against and abstentions -- and declares the motion won, lost or undecided.

The wind up (optional)

After the vote, the speaker may wish to highlight various aspects of the debate, or even to give an appraisal of any Speaker. These comments should be constructive in nature.

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Adjudication

One or more adjudicators may judge the debate along more formal grounds. If this is the case, the leading adjudicator will give an overview of the debate, the positives and negatives of the speakers, their tactics, arguments and content and award the debate to team which has been judged to have won according to the criteria.

For more information, refer to Scoring a debate on page 18.

The close

Details of the location, date, time and motion of the next debate should be given EXPLICITLY by the President. These should be noted by the Secretary. Once completed, all participants should be thanked with special thanks where merited. The meeting should then be adjourned.

Minutes

The Secretary should keep notes of the proceedings including the final vote, plus any points which need to be discussed with the executive at a later date. Any such meetings should be publicized at this time.

Roles in a debate

Different people play specific roles in a debate. This section contains descriptions of each role.

President

The President or the deputy representing this office, embodies the essence of the club. The President will start the evening's proceedings on time, welcome members and guests, explain the evening's structure and pursue the agenda if there is one.

As the opening speaker at the debate, the President could give an introduction of the club to guests, and ask if anyone would be interested in who they are and why they are there. This would include first time attendees and ancient members.

The President (or deputy) would be expected to conduct the entire evening activities being the person in charge of introducing each activity before it takes place, who is responsible for each and an introduction if wished.

Speaker

The Speaker for each debate is selected by the Society President and is responsible for ensuring that the debate is conducted in an orderly and effective manner. The Speaker is required to know the rules and procedures of debate and to assist and direct Speakers and Members who deviate from these guidelines. The Speaker must remain impartial during the entire debate.

The Speaker of the House has these duties:

- Chairs the debate
- Calls each debater to the podium
- Rules on procedural violations
- Calls on judges to give critique
- Concludes the debate (Hopefully, gives an overview of the debate with positives and directions to improve areas which need more work)

The Speaker of the House is widely viewed as symbolizing the authority of the House. The Speaker's most prominent role is that of the presiding officer of the House. In this capacity he/she is empowered by members to administer proceedings on the House floor, including the power to recognize Members on the floor to speak. If Representatives of the Government or the Opposition exceed their allotted time, the Speaker may, after half a minute's notice, order the Member of the Government or a Member of the House to end his or her remarks.

If heckling becomes disruptive, the Speaker shall call for order and, in the extreme if it threatens the debate, order a Member to cease and desist.

After the vote, the speaker may wish to highlight various aspects of the debate, or even to give an appraisal of any Speaker. These comments should be constructive in nature.

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The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister has three tasks in his opening speech.

The first, and prime responsibility is to provide a working definition of the resolution, usually, although not always, by defining the operative words in it. In this definition the 1st Speaker for the Ayes should clearly outline the parameters of the debate.

Second a debatable argument must be introduced within this definition, arguing that some sort of action take place, or that a philosophical, ethical or moral judgment should be made. The failure to provide an arguable case (for example, by defining “murder” as death” in the resolution, “Be it resolved that Murder is Death”) is a tautology, and if challenged as such by the opposing side, will result in the Speaker of the House allowing the Noes to redefine as they see fit.

Finally, the 1st Speaker for the Ayes should introduce evidence to support his argument. This evidence can be drawn from the general or specific knowledge of the Speaker, and can include statistics, generally accepted information, or the statements of important individuals.

Definitions of the debate which are unacceptable

The Prime Minister MUST properly set forth the resolution for the debate to proceed properly. For that reason, the Leader of the Government must avoid the using the following in the resolution.

Truism

A case is too narrow if there are no convincing arguments against it, or if it simply supports an uncontroversial status quo. Such a case is called a truism, and is prohibited. A case can be a truism even if there are some random possible arguments to be made against the proposition. The line separating a fair case from a truism is necessarily blurry, but should be apparent in most instances. Because the Government has the burden of presenting a debatable case, they will be heavily penalized for running a truism, and the Opposition has the prerogative to redefine the case.

Tautology

A tautology is a case which is true by definition. Suppose the Government runs "Coke is it." The PM then goes on to define "it" as "a sweet-flavored soft drink." This type of argument is a tautology, sometimes referred to as "circular logic." The Government has thus defined the Opposition into a corner. This is not allowed.

Specialized Knowledge

Detailed facts about a case that are not considered common knowledge are called, oddly enough, specialized knowledge (also known as specific knowledge). In proposing the case, specialized knowledge outside that of the range of a typical, well-read college student, should not be. It is assumed that debaters will have a working knowledge of major issues in international and national affairs, basic Western philosophy and fundamental documents like the Charter of the United Nations or the topics in The Economist. References to such sources or events are not considered specialized knowledge. If, however, a case hinges on facts or

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statistics which the Opposition could not be expected to know, or if the entire case involves obscure circumstances, then the Opposition can contest such specific knowledge. However, simply because a case may involve the price of tea in Zambia does not mean that a Government team cannot run it. In such cases, as long as all of the relevant facts are presented during the PMC, and these facts are simple enough that a previously uninformed observer can understand the case, then the Government should be able to withstand charges of specialized knowledge. A good test for the Government to use is to see whether the PM can clearly explain all of the relevant facts in a leisurely two minutes. Specialized knowledge applies only to the Government team. There is no such creature as specialized Opposition knowledge

Leader of the Opposition

The Leader of the Opposition has three responsibilities.

First the definition of the resolution proposed by the Ayes must be accepted or rejected. Acceptance of the definition may be tacit, but to reject the definition a formal refusal must be made. The definition may be rejected only if it is wholly undebatable, which is to say a truism or a tautology. The Noes must otherwise accept the definition even if it puts them in a philosophically unpleasant position or if the latitude for conflict with the Ayes' position is minimal.

Having explained why he/she believes the resolution as defined to be undebatable, he/she should request a ruling from the Speaker of the House. If the Ayes' definition is renounced, the member must propose another definition and proceed to debate on this topic. The members of the Ayes must then adopt the definition proposed by the Noes.

Once the topic of debate has been clarified, the member proceeds to refute the case presented by the Government. He/she may refute either the examples which support the Governments case, the thrust of the case itself (by presenting examples of his/her own) or the philosophical premise on which the case is built. He/she may also choose to counter the Government in all three levels.

The Leaders final responsibility is to introduce the counter case if there is to be one. The Noes may win a debate simply by proving that the Ayes' stance is untenable, but it may also choose to propose another interpretation of the situation. If the Ayes have proposed a plan, the counter-case may consist exclusively of another plan, which better solves the problem identified by the Government. If the Opposition chooses to do this, however, it would be inconsistent of them to continue to argue that there is no problem and hence no need for a plan.

On judging sheets, the Opposition are awarded points both for their refutation of the Governments case and for their constructive comments, though usually this latter carries a much smaller proportion of the score.

Minister For the Government

The Minister for the Government has two tasks.

He/she must refute the arguments brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, which again may be argued at the level of evidence, argument or premise. Elements used in this refutation must be consistent with the rest of the Governments case.

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The bulk of the Ministers speech should be devoted to elaborating the case presented by the Prime Minister. Ideally, the case will have been thoroughly developed before the debate begins and the points in support of the argument divided between the two members. The member should never contradict the Prime Minister. Generally the minister is awarded a greater proportion of his/her score on the bases of his/her constructive argument rather than his/her refutation.

Minister of the Opposition

The Minister of the opposition has three responsibilities.

This should consist of summarizing the principle arguments and their development through the course of the debate.

Next, he/she should refute the case of the Ayes, supporting arguments proposed by his/her colleague, the 1st Speaker of the Noes. As in the Ayes' side, members from the same team should not contradict each other.

The final responsibility of the 2nd Speaker of the Noes is to expand on the Noes' case, reaffirming the position presented by the 1st Member.

During the last several minutes of his/her speech, the Minister for the Opposition should introduce no new arguments. This rule is often only loosely enforced, but to introduce a key element of the Oppositions case moments before the Minister for the Government's rebuttal is unsportsmanlike and hence, thoroughly unacceptable.

Final rebuttal (Minister for the Opposition)

The final speaker for the Opposition should concentrate on rebutting the main thrust of the Governments case and reaffirm the Opposition's case. During this rebuttal the speaker is not permitted to introduce new evidence to support or refute previous arguments.

Final affirmation of the motion (Minister for the Government)

As the proposer of the motion, the minister for the Government has the final say in the debate. As about 60% of debates are won by the Opposition, this final appeal is vital to the Governments cause. The Speaker should briefly rebut the case presented by the Opposition and then compellingly reaffirm the Government's position. As for the last few minutes of the Oppositions speech, no new arguments may be presented, though new evidence in support of old arguments is permissible as is evidence in direct refutation of anything presented by the Opposition.

Preparing for a debate

The quality of a debate is largely dependent on the quality of the case proposed by the Ayes. The best cases are clear, logical and well organized. To present a case in such a way that the Noes cannot figure out what the Ayes' position is, is not to debate well.

The case presented should have at least some remote connection to the resolution. Some resolutions make it abundantly clear what the thrust of the Government's case ought to be (for example, "Be it resolved that pornography is worse than its suppression"), while others leave themselves open to interpretation (for example, "Be it resolved that not everybody does it, but everybody should"). The logical thread tying the case to the resolution is called the link and it should be made within the first few minutes of the Prime Minister's speech.

The Government has two options in the kind of case they wish to present. They may present a case in which they identify some problem and then propose a solution or they may choose to argue a philosophical or theoretical point.

In the former situation a good case will demonstrate that there is a problem, and that this problem will not resolve itself under the prevailing conditions. Next the issues associated with the problem should be considered and why these are important. Finally a workable solution to the problem should be introduced. This plan should not produce more problems. Each of these elements may be supported with facts, examples, statistics, and the opinions of great people.

In a philosophical case, the Government prove either that this is the way the world is or that a particular value judgment should be made. These arguments are most easily won when the case under discussion is reduced to its most fundamental components, for example to prove that to reject the case is to reject truth, justice or freedom.

Tips

The essence of debating is embodied in three characteristics:

Opposing views

Clash is the essence of debate. If the two sides do not oppose one another, no debate has taken place. It is not enough to make eloquent speeches, the Speakers must directly address the positions of each other.

Proof

Statements made in debate must be proven. Stringing together a list of assertions does not establish a case, the contentions must be supported with some evidence.

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Conciseness

And finally, effectiveness in debating is largely a function of making a point quickly and succinctly. Lengthy speeches tend to diminish the impact of points that are well made and they increase the chances of a slip that makes the Speaker vulnerable to a counter-argument.

Debating frequently requires people to argue in favour of positions that they do not really support. As such, all attacks must be directed toward the arguments presented by the opponent rather than the opponent himself. All that matters is whether his argument is good; whether he is a nice guy is not relevant to the debate.

As in all forms of argument and public address, debaters are well advised to repeat everything three times: at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the speech. Clarity is the key to persuasion. Since the last sentence will be the most remembered, it should be a strong restatement of the case.

Finally, debating is meant to be fun. While some debates deal with serious topics, debating is, after all, merely a game. Never take anything said in debates very seriously and remember that humour (when in good taste) has a place in every debate.

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Scoring a debate

The goal of competitive debating is to persuade. The key to being persuasive is to present arguments that support a position and counter-arguments that refute an opposing position. By itself, however, presenting well-reasoned arguments and counter-arguments will not necessarily be enough to guarantee success.

A debater's speech must be well organized so that the debater makes good use of his/her allotted time. The speech should also be delivered with confidence and flair. And, finally, debaters on a team should show evidence of working together.

Judging criteria

A speech is judged and scored on six key elements:-

- Argument
- Content
- Rebuttal/refutation
- Style/rhetoric
- Teamwork
- Overall.

Argument

A team should present three or four separate and distinct arguments. Each argument should be supported by evidence. Each argument should be clearly related to the Resolution.

Content

An argument must be backed up with evidence. This can take the form of statistics, real-life examples and factual knowledge.

Rebuttal/refutation

Following the Prime Minister's speech, the focus of the remaining speeches should be on rebuttal. Each argument presented by a speaker must be opposed by each successive speaker with a counter-argument.

A single, dropped argument will not automatically mean that a team loses the debate, but a convincing refutation of most of the opponents' points will be necessary to carry on the debate.

N.B. – The Prime Minister is not scored on refutation in his/her opening speech. The team score is averaged over the Government's two speeches. The Opposition must accept the Resolution as defined by the Government and present arguments and counter-arguments that relate to the Resolution as defined. Failure to do so is fatal.

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The exception to this is when the Opposition is challenging the Resolution as trivial, tautological, or special knowledge.

Style/rhetoric

The manner in which arguments are presented can, at times, be as important as the arguments themselves. A smooth, polished and confident speaking-style is very persuasive. And using rhetorical techniques and flourishes to add flair to a speech can heighten the impact of the presentation. Also, effective use of humour can be a very powerful style element.

Teamwork

Debaters are expected to perform as a team. Earlier speakers set the stage for latter speakers, while the latter expand on and reinforce earlier arguments. A follow-up speaker may need to clarify (and sometimes even correct!) a point made by the earlier speaker. However, this should be done very carefully. Contradictions and inconsistencies between speakers on the same team can be fatal.

Overall

This is how the pieces fit together. Definitions of the Resolution should be unambiguous and steer debate onto the Government's strongest ground.

Arguments should be clearly and carefully mapped out, with more time allotted to the key arguments and less to the minor ones.

Rebuttals should concisely and powerfully distil the central issue in an argument and drive to its core.

Speakers should not get bogged down in unnecessary details. They should use all their allotted time, but leave themselves sufficient time to recap their arguments/counter-arguments.

Adjudication score-guide

Use this guide to determine how to numerically evaluate a debater's effectiveness.

Argument

0	No arguments.
1-2	Few arguments; marginal relevancy; unclear.
3	One clear, relevant argument together with muddled thinking.
4-5	More than one clear, relevant argument.
6-10	Multiple, interesting arguments

Content

0	No content.
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-
- 1-2 Partial content.
 - 3 Content for key premise in all arguments.
 - 4-5 Strong evidence for one argument or content for secondary premises.
 - 6-10 Strong evidence for several arguments and content for secondary premises.
-

Rebuttal/refutation

-
- 0 No counter-arguments.
 - 1 Some missed arguments; unclear rebuttals.
 - 2-3 No missed arguments; one clear rebuttal.
 - 4-5 Clear rebuttals to all arguments.
 - 6-10 Devastating rebuttals and/or new arguments to support antithesis.
-

Style/rhetoric

-
- 0 Poorly organized; hesitations; flat, distracting mannerisms.
 - 1 No significant weaknesses.
 - 2 Crisp delivery; some flair.
 - 3-4 Humour; choice of words; other rhetorical devices.
 - 5 Outstanding speech in all regards.
-

Teamwork

-
- 0 No setup or follow through.
 - 1 Nominal setup or follow through.
 - 2-3 Speakers share in full development of arguments.
 - 4-5 Seamless presentation & balance of styles.
-

Overall

-
- 0 Unpersuasive and incomprehensible.
 - 1 Hit-and-miss.
 - 2-3 More 'hits' than 'misses'; generally solid performance.
 - 4-5 All hits; effective use of time.
 - 6-10 Perfect execution; interesting arguments; entertaining and persuasive.
-

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Sample scoring situation

One of the more difficult concepts in debating is the difference between AN ARGUMENT and EVIDENCE. Both are necessary, but they are two different things.

An argument without evidence is a mere assertion. Evidence without an argument has no relevancy.

The following example will illustrate what Judges look for in a debate:-Once you read the sample resolution and arguments, scan the subsequent Commentary section.

Sample resolution

The Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada should be fired.

Sample argument/evidence/counter-arguments

1. The Leader is a liar

Deceit by political leaders undermines confidence in the political process.

This is bad, so the Leader should be fired.

Various examples of lies, broken election promises or other deception.

Poll results, editorials etc., linking dishonesty with confidence.

The examples are isolated and not sufficient to establish a pattern.

The examples are not factually correct.

All politicians lie. Other skills possessed by the Leader are more important and respected.
2. The Leader is incompetent. This is creating a real risk to Canada and Canadians. This cannot be tolerated.

Various examples of where the Leader has misjudged an issue or handled a situation poorly.

Negative consequences of mismanagement.

The mistakes are isolated.

The Government does not understand the Leader's strategy in examples cited and fails to appreciate his wisdom.
3. The public no longer supports the Leader. His unpopularity will result in the party losing the next election. This is bad.

Poll results, anecdotal evidence of dislike.

The results are a blip.

Other leaders are even less popular, so it is not clear that this will cost the election.

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Commentary

The trick in successful debating is judging what can be assumed and what needs to be proved.

In the first argument, the Government clearly needs to prove that the Leader has been dishonest. If the Government does not back this argument up with at least one example of a lie, it is simply making an unproven assertion. How many examples of lies are needed? There is no sure answer.

While the Government clearly needs to present evidence to prove that the Leader is a liar, it is safer for the Government to assume other parts of the argument. For example, it is less controversial to say that deceit undermines confidence.

Nevertheless, the Opposition could choose to rebut this part of the argument and the Government's Second Speaker would have to address this counter-argument.

Finally, it is probably safest to assume that undermining confidence is bad. Counter-arguments are still possible but not likely to be persuasive.

One guide to deciding what needs to be proved in an argument is the "does-it-follow?" test. For example, if you cite a single example of deceit, "does it follow" that the individual is a liar? And if the Leader is a liar, "does it follow" that people will lose confidence in the political process? If you can imagine someone saying that "No, it does not follow", then you need to prove that part of your argument.

The third argument is interesting for two different reasons.

First, this argument appeals to a different persuasive element. Arguments #1 and #2 are idealistic arguments based on assumptions about the political process. Argument #3, on the other hand, is more of a pragmatic argument based on assumptions about the desirability of re-electing the Liberal party.

Even more interesting, as the counter-arguments illustrate, each of the parts of this argument is equally open to attack.

As a matter of debating strategy, the Government could focus attention on proving that the Leader is down in the polls, in a bid to distract the Opposition. If the Opposition failed to pick up on an obvious weakness in the argument, a Judge could mark them down.

Scoring

There are obviously different ways to get a certain score. The following simply illustrates one way to receive a certain score:-

If the Prime Minister simply said "The Leader is a liar so he should be fired.", the argument would be unclear and only marginally relevant (at best). To score a "3" on ARGUMENT, the Prime Minister would need to completely develop one argument. If all three arguments were completely developed, the Prime Minister would score a "5".

Scores above "5" are considered bonuses and would require more originality and interest than is in these three predictable arguments.

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If the Prime Minister provided examples of lies, mismanagement and poll results, the CONTENT would be scored a “3”. To receive a “4” or “5”, the Prime Minister would have to present numerous examples to convincingly demonstrate a pattern, or content to prove some of the additional premises in the arguments. Again, scores above “5” would be considered bonuses and would require extensive evidence relating to each part of all the arguments.

If the Leader of the Opposition addressed each of the Prime Minister’s arguments and had a clear counter-argument for one of them, the REBUTTAL would be scored in the “2-3” range. Clear counter-arguments for each argument would be required in order to score in the “4-5” range.

If the Leader of the Opposition had counter-arguments for each argument and, for example, completely dismantled the third argument by attacking each of its parts, the score would get up into the bonus range.

References

The following is a list of on-line debating references. You can also find books at your local bookstore or library.

http://www.student.virginia.edu/~wash-soc/d_manual.html

<http://hometown.aol.com/jher599950/page1.html>

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~jmccrosk/27.htm>

<http://www.fandm.edu/CampusLife/Organizations/DebatingClub/rules.html>

<http://www.georgetown.edu/organizations/parld/guide.htm>

<http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/arunion/debating.html>

<http://www.bethel.edu/Majors/Communication/npda/parliamentary.html>

http://216.239.35.100/search?q=cache:IHbWcY42QsEC:www.klubdebat.uw.edu.pl/klubdebat/download/Parliamentary%2520Debate.doc+debates+debating+lor+tips&hl=en&lr=lang_en

<http://www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/org/debate/guide/>

<http://www.angelfire.com/journal2/englishresource/debate.html>

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Sample debate topics

You can debate just about any topic you like. The following list contains many suggestions – you can twist these topics as you like or make up your own.

1. A society has a moral obligation to redress its historical injustices.
2. Appearance is more important than reality.
3. Art should be free from censorship.
4. Big brother is preferable to big sister.
5. Capitalism provides for a better society than socialism..
6. Capitalism would collapse without religion.
7. Censorship can never be justified.
8. Censorship is an insult to the intelligence.
9. Child labour is necessary in developing countries
10. Community censorship of pornography is justified.
11. Consumption of drugs should be made legal.
12. Corruption rules the planet.
13. Cricket is to sport as Rolls Royce is to motorcars.
14. Crimes against the police should be prosecuted more severely than other crimes.
15. Culture no longer exists.
16. Democracy has failed the third world
17. Democracy is a fallacy.
18. Democracy is an illusion.
19. Diplomacy is the tool of the weak.
20. Education is a matter of faith
21. English is the most important language in the world today.
22. Environmentalism is mostly hot air
23. Escape is a legitimate solution.
24. Experiments on animals should be banned.
25. Globalization causes terrorism
26. Globalization erodes national culture.
27. God is a woman
28. Government by a benevolent dictator is preferable to a democracy.
29. Greed is still Good

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30. Hate speech ought to be censored for the good of society.
31. Human rights are universal.
32. Identity cards pose a threat to our privacy.
33. It is better to be a dissatisfied Socrates than a satisfied pig.
34. It is better to be lucky than talented
35. It is not necessary to understand things in order to argue about them.
36. Justice is a myth.
37. Legalization of drugs is justifiable.
38. Legalization of marijuana is justifiable.
39. Little learning is a dangerous thing.
40. Media has had a bad press.
41. Military action will reduce international terrorism.
42. Military intervention is a necessary evil.
43. Military threat is reality.
44. Modern technology is more foes than friend is.
45. Money is more useful than brain.
46. New World Order is no such thing
47. Non-nuclear nations should stay way.
48. Northerners do it better
49. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be
50. Nuclear power is the best energy option.
51. Olympic ideal is dead
52. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.
53. Pets should be prohibited in large cities.
54. Politics in sport should be banned.
55. Prisoners should not be allowed to vote.
56. Private schooling should be abolished.
57. Problem with political jokes is that them mostly get elected
58. Professional athletes are over paid
59. Prostitution should be legalized.
60. Public's right to know outweighs a candidate's right to privacy.
61. Resident non- citizens should be given the right to vote.
62. Right is more important than peace.
63. School censorship of academic material is harmful to the educational development of high school students.
64. Science has made God redundant

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65. Science has outlived its usefulness.
66. Shareholding Democracy is a receipt for disaster.
67. Socialism is dead
68. Sovereignty is an outdated concept.
69. Space exploration can no longer be justified.
70. State should invest in culture.
71. Strong dictatorship is better than weak democracy.
72. Sustainable development is an oxymoron.
73. TH favors America's role as world policeman
74. TH favors big government
75. TH has lost confidence in the Church
76. TH prefers second place to first.
77. TH regards royalty as irrelevant.
78. TH regrets the loss of cultural identity
79. TH rejects consensus
80. TH retains confidence in the peace process
81. TH reveres the memory of the British Empire.
82. TH supports gay marriage
83. TH supports privatization
84. TH supports the right to bear arms
85. TH supports the right to strike
86. TH supports the statement, "Yankee Go Home!"
87. TH values security over privacy.
88. THB in economics policy before social policy
89. THB in love at first NIGHT
90. THB in trial by jury
91. THB it's good to talk
92. THB that religious education is brainwashing kids.
93. THB that state has a duty to integrate immigrants into normal life.
94. The end justifies the means.
95. There are no absolutes.
96. There are no inalienable rights.
97. There is a crock of gold under the rainbow
98. There is a different law for the rich.
99. There is always a next bus.

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100. There is in this age a dearth of heroes.
101. There is no such thing as a right to die.
102. There is no such thing as universal human rights.
103. There must always be the poor.
104. There should not be cigarette sponsorship of sport.
105. Third world debt should be cancelled.
106. Those who destroy should rebuild
107. THW abolish capital punishment
108. THW ban prisoners publishing accounts of their crimes.
109. THW ban the advertisement of gambling
110. THW boldly go where no house has gone before.
111. THW expand the protection of immigrants rights
112. THW throw the television out of our homes.
113. THW watch more Television
114. Tolerance costs too much.
115. Tougher sentencing will reduce crime.
116. Tourism is debauching your culture.
117. Trading hours should be unrestricted.
118. Uncle Sam is a poor relation.
119. Uncle Sam should stay at home.
120. United Nations no longer lives up to its ideals.
121. United States foreign policy is responsible for Sept. 11.
122. War on drugs is worth the fight
123. We should grow cabbages rather than roses.
124. We shouldn't trust anyone over thirty.
125. We would rather have jam in the hand than pie in the sky
126. You can't always get what you want.
127. Zoos should be closed.

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Additional content

The content in this section may be integrated into other parts of the document at a later date.

Speaker role

Speaker of the House is widely viewed as symbolizing the authority of the House. The Speaker's most prominent role is that of presiding officer of the House. In this capacity he/ she is empowered by members to administer proceedings on the House floor, including the power to recognize Members on the floor to speak.

The Speaker presides over the House and ensures that everyone respects its rules and traditions and must be impartial and apply the rules to all Members equally.

The Speaker may introduce the club to those assembled, and explain the process of debates and debating as conducted at the Toronto debating Society.

Part of the introduction should include an introduction to the debating style, the times of speakers (7, 7, 5, 5 audience, 2, 2) points of order if active this debate, the clubs view of heckling and audience participation.

Here is a list of terms and references which may be given to the audience. Obviously, what you wish to say will depend on your style as much as the level of experience in the teams and visitors to the House.

You may explain Debating Terms (Optional)

- "Be it resolved"
.....
 - The Government, the team in favour of the resolution
 - Opposition: the team against the resolution
 - Evidence: the proof used to support your case
 - Refute: to show what is wrong with the other team's evidence
 - Rebuttal: summary of your best arguments
- Explain Team Responsibilities (Sometimes Usefull)
- Government:
 - Define the resolution
 - Present a plan to implement the resolution
 - Prove that the resolution is necessary and beneficial
 - Refute the arguments of the Opposition
 - Opposition:
 - Refute the arguments of the Government

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- Prove that there is no need for change
- Prove that the resolution is not beneficial

AN OVERVIEW OF DEBATE SCORING – PARLIAMENTARY STYLE

The aim of this document is to outline a set of directions for judges to base their adjudication on. Obviously, if we debate in other environments, these criteria will not necessarily be exactly the same, or in some cases when say debating internationally, even remotely similar. We are dealing specifically with the Toronto Debating Society – other clubs and societies will score differently. We also score the team – not individually; this is after all a team sport. These points may be adjusted as necessary as we become more conversant with not only the techniques of scoring, but also the problems associated with keeping track of a “good” debate. Due to the fact that there is no way you can “define” a good debate, judging must be a personal direction. We hope to have common ground with all the adjudicators, but only general points as to what makes a good debate will be given here. Quantitative and qualitative indicators are simply that – INDICATORS. Good debating.....

JUDGING A DEBATE

The goal of competitive debate is to persuade. The object of that persuasion is the judge. The judge is the ultimate arbiter of the round, and his decision is final. Some tournaments will have panels of three or more judges in some rounds; in such a case, judges usually do not confer on their decisions, and the team capturing the majority of ballots is declared the winner. In most cases, however, there will be a single judge, who will also serve as the Speaker of the House.

Judging Criteria

The basic judging criterion for parliamentary debate is simple: persuasiveness. Unlike in some other forms of debate, a team will not automatically win a round due to their opponents' "dropping an argument" or similar categorical criteria. Rather, the judge is instructed to award the round to the team that, in his opinion, did the better debating -- whose presentations and arguments he found most persuasive. While this is necessarily a broad and ambiguous criteria, there are a few particular areas that will be taken into account by almost every judge:

Argumentation and analysis. The backbone of parliamentary debate. A team that presents coherent, logical analysis will fare better than a team that relies (solely) on assertion or emotionalism. Arguments should be clear, convincing, and provide a clash with the other team's values.

Content. While parliamentary debate is not based primarily on evidence or statistics, real-life examples and factual knowledge used to bolster your position will always help. While facts should not be used as a crutch which eliminates the need for analysis, they can provide an important way to anchor and reinforce abstract argumentation.

Refutation. Don't simply present your side of the issue -- make sure that you confront your opponent's arguments head-on and beat them. Again, a single dropped argument will not automatically lose you the round (unless it is a key argument!), but a convincing refutation of most of your opponent's points will be necessary to carry the round.

Organization. Judges appreciate a speech whose arguments are clearly and carefully mapped out. Through signposting and other techniques, different lines of argument should be distinctly presented. Rebuttals should concisely and powerfully distill the most important issues of the round, and should not get bogged down in unnecessary details.

Style and rhetoric. The manner in which arguments are presented is almost as important as the arguments themselves. A smooth, polished and confident speaking style will impress judges. Using rhetorical techniques and flourishes to add flair to a speech will add impact to your presentation.

Wit. Humor is an important parliamentary debate, and its use can add interest and impact to a speech. Wit, appropriate sarcasm, and funny examples and anecdotes will be appreciated by most judges; inappropriate

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jokes, pure ad hominem insult and mere stand-up comedy generally won't. Effective humor can be one of your most powerful tools, and it will often be taken into account in judges' decisions.

Points of Information. Although we do not use this procedure, other teams may in external debates make use of this. Be Prepared! A debater who used Points of Information well will be at an advantage in the round. Both by raising powerful or witty points and by quickly, confidently and effectively responding to points offered by the other team, you can demonstrate your ability to think on your feet -- a quality respected by almost every judge.

Teamwork. Debaters are expected to perform as a team, reinforcing each others' arguments and carrying a coherent team philosophy throughout the round. Don't contradict your partner -- rather expand on arguments previously made to complement the efforts of your teammate.

Speaker Points

In addition to deciding the round, the judge will award each team between one and fifty "speaker points." Despite their name, speaker points are not based solely on stylistic speaking ability. Rather, they represent the overall level of debating presented by a team -- including argumentation, analysis and refutation in addition to style and rhetoric. Debaters will also be ranked from 1 to 4 in the round, based on their speaker points. Generally speaking, the team with the higher total of speaker points (or, in the event of a tie, the lower number of ranks) will be awarded the round.

In general: Speakers gain points for doing things right (see "That's Debatable document") and lose points for doing things wrong: Such as:

- failing to counter another speaker's argument or counter argument;
- merely asserting a claim without offering evidence;
- failing, in the counter argument, to point out an obvious weakness (including assertion) in an argument.
- Speaking after the allotted time has elapsed – this can lose you points if the speaker makes a mistake).

It is also worth pointing out that each judge will need to assess the differing roles of the Government and the Opposition. This can be highlighted say for example, the Governments role in refutation may be marked only on the second speaker as the Prime Minister will not be required to do this, but both speakers of the opposition will.

The items below reflect the weighting given to each part of these items. Each judge will mark higher or lower for their "ideals" or lack of, again, this is a general guide.

Debating: Government (Lead, I & II) Opposition (Oppose, I & II)

	PM	MG	PM Sum	Average	Leader Opp	MO	LO	Sum	Average
Argument	10	10	10	___	10	10	10	___	
Content	10	10	10	___	10	10	10	___	
Refutation/ Rebuttal		10	10	___	10	10	10	___	
Style	5	5	5	___	5	5	5	___	
Teamwork		5	5	___		5	5	___	
Point of Information (if taken)	5	5		___	5	5		___	
Overall	10	10	10	___	10	10	10	___	
				Possible: 55				Possible 55	

Here is a typical debating teams point scale:

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Below 1: Horrible. Judges will not generally award points in this range unless the team, in addition to being unpersuasive and incomprehensible, was deliberately rude or offensive.

1 to 5: Very poor speech. Team has serious difficulty maintaining a coherent argument and expressing thoughts; speech ends well before allotted time.

5 to 10: Poor speech. Difficulty in expression and analysis; arguments unpersuasive; does not entirely fill time.

11 to 18: Below average. Team is lacking in one or more of the above listed areas.

19 to 26: Average. Generally competent speech; perhaps some minor flaws; unexceptional.

27 to 33: Good. Team is persuasive and presents material well. Speaker shines in one or two areas.

34 to 39: Excellent. No noticeable flaws in presentation or delivery. Persuasive analysis; effective refutation; expert presentation and polished speaking style. A speaker averaging a 34 every round will most probably finish in the top ten of a tournament.

40 to 46: Outstanding. Team excels in all areas; speech had a tremendous impact on the round; flawless presentation. One of the best speeches of the tournament. A speaker averaging a 40 every round will almost certainly be among the top two or three speakers of a tournament.

46 to 50 : Among the best speeches you have ever heard. If any speaker finishes with a 45 average, he or she will almost certainly be named the best speaker of the year

51 to 53: The best speech you have ever heard. Left you in tears. On the level of the best of Winston Churchill or Martin Luther King. Extraordinarily rare.

55: The best speech ever given ever, in the history of the world, period. Remember the monolith in 2001? If it took up debate and gave a speech, it might be a 50. It is highly doubtful that you will be personally experiencing anything close to this.

Points on adjudication outside of this club:

This is a typical approach by Hart House Debating Club (U of T). It may be useful to compare to our current approach and for future reference.

The judge's decision, points and comments will be recorded on a ballot which will be given to you at the end of the tournament. Make sure that you review your ballots carefully to identify areas that need improvement. Novices should not be discouraged if they don't win all their rounds or earn high speaker points right away. Debating ability often comes only with practice, and even the most experienced debater has off rounds.

This method allows you to get a sense of how the debate progressed and how organized the individuals were.

On an official CUSID ballot there are five categories for consideration. A lot of judges will just score "in a range", but it is usually useful to judge by categories to get an accurate score. The first category is argumentation. This refers to the major points brought forward to defend one or the other side of the issue being debated. There is a fine line to tread here. You should only be judging in the context of the debate, that is, it is incumbent on the opposite side to belittle particular arguments. Sometimes, though, someone will say something that's just plain dumb or wrong, and it's O.K. to mark them down for it.

What you are looking for is the originality and complexity of the arguments. Is what they are saying thought provoking and novel, or cliched and stale? Obviously, this determination will be different for each judge, but you get the general idea. Both sides should be proposing arguments for their side of the issue, but the government will typically provide most of the constructive argumentation.

The opposition usually does most of the next category: refutation. This is a specific term that refers to all things said about the merits of the opponents arguments. Refutation should be as direct as possible. It is generally easier to destroy than create, and similarly it is easier to tear down arguments than to come up with good ones yourself. Try to keep these two categories separate when judging, particularly when judging the opposition. A superior opposition will not just attack government points but come up with arguments of their own. The third category is organization/analysis. These terms are paired purposely. It is easier to understand the flow of argumentation when it is clearly presented, as anyone who has had to wade through some 17th

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century political tracts will no doubt be aware (getting to the point was no often their strong suit). A good debater will tell you what they'll going to tell you, will tell you and then tell you what they've said. The fourth category is style/delivery. This refers to how they say things; whether the way they communicate enhances or detracts from the presentation.

Possible “welcome” stuff

The Toronto Debating Society would like to invite you to a different kind of sporting event: learn how to think on your feet, confuse and confound your opponents and have a great time too! Great experience for social discussions, business meetings, negotiating and presentations. Bring your friends and meet new ones too!

An Introduction to the Toronto Debating Society.

Formed in 1995 with a core of 7 members, and no more than a common interest in the power of the spoken word, discussions, critical thinking, and the ability to think on your feet, the group has, over the year developed it's own style regarding debating and public speaking.

Now into it's tenth year, membership is typically 25, with a fairly regular turn out of 15 – 18 per evening – with several new faces at each event. Attendees are from all types of backgrounds, and follow many types of careers and professions. We attract all manner of people who are interested in public speaking, with a variety of reasons for doing so.

The evening is roughly split into two, with announcements and public speaking (via audience participation) impromptu exercises, a “common interest” speech from a member then a break. The debate begins after this.

We debate in the Governmental style: the "Government" with a “Prime Minister” and Government minister proposing the motion, and the "Opposition", with the “Leader of the Opposition” and opposition minister opposing the motion. Both leading speakers have 7 minutes, and the minister's 5 minutes. The leaders both end with a 2 minute summation to wrap up the arguments. The audience participates after all speakers have spoken once.

All speakers have specific tasks which are part of the debate, but the actual style and content (if any!!), is the concern of the individual involved.

Concerned as much with the technical aspects of debate and speaking, as with the enjoyment of speaking in public, the group tends to be mainly light hearted, but do not expect to have an easy ride through a debate!

The name of the debating game is to win, and rhetoric, emotion, logic, bombast and simple subterfuge are all part of the experience.

Expect to be heckled – enjoy the repartee and occasional sparkling wit (or sometimes other devices) from some of our members. Debating is all about gaining the advantage in the practical application of speaking to convince your audience of your point(s) of view. There is practically no limit to what we debate, be it immigration, religion, school holidays, sexual orientation, government policy, all are grist to the mill of the debaters.

You do not need to believe in your side of the argument either, the more advanced you become, the easier it is

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to follow the rules of engagement and oppose your opponents. We have recently introduced video taping and adjudication to our evenings, and use this to give positive feedback to the participants as to how to improve their scores in future debates. As a club, we welcome ideas and innovations along any lines.

The club has many items and documents to help newcomers to understanding the clubs aims, direction and the basic “how to’s” of Parliamentary debating.

Join us twice a month and improve your ability to think on your feet, your public speaking, debating, logical thinking and presentation skills. No formal experience necessary: all levels of speaking abilities welcome