

The Final Debate-January 14th at 1:30.

This afternoons topic for Finale Debate are;

- 1) Knowledge of history enriches one's worldview: yes or no?
- 2) Does modern social media make people less socially active?

Please be prepared to debate both the cons and pros of both topics.

On the next couple of pages you will find important directions on how to debate, and the rubric in which you will be scored.

Don't hesitate to ask your teachers for direction.

Five steps for preparing a debate with a class

Step 1: Brainstorm ideas

- Individual brainstorm – allow five minutes silent time for individual brainstorming – student should write one point on each of the sticky notes. Tell them to use key words rather than full sentences.
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Step 2: Organize ideas

- From the brainstorm you will need to identify between 7 and 9 arguments. They may have more than these so to get them down they can:
- Scrap small or insignificant arguments
- Join together similar arguments to make larger ones
- On their sheet you need to write the names of the arguments. EACH NAME SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN THREE WORDS.

Step Three: Structure the speeches

Introduce the idea of the speech structure on the board:

- **Introduction** – who are you and what do you stand for?
- **Preview** – What are the names of the points you are going to cover?
- **Rebuttal** – unless you are the first speaker, you'd say “first lets take a look at what we heard from the previous speaker” and disagree with their points.
- **Point One** – “Now onto my points”
- NameExplanation (the reasoning – why is your point true and why does it mean your overall position is right?)
- Evidence (facts, analogies, examples, imagery or authority to support your reasoning)
- Point Two – Name, Explanation, Evidence
- Point Three – Name, Explanation, Evidence
- Reminder – remind the audience of the three points you have covered
- Vote for Me

Step 4: Prepare your speeches

Introduce the Idea of developing your arguments by “Making Them REAL”

- **Reason**
- **Evidence**
- **Analysis**
- **Link**

Choose the first speakers in each group and allow them some time to think about how to make each of their points REAL. Only allow them to write down six words for each point (in addition to the name)– it’s speaking and listening not reading out!

Choose the summary speaker and either a chair or timekeeper from each group

Step 5: Prepare the rest of the class

Whilst the first three speakers are preparing their speeches:

- The summary speakers need to think what they think the biggest issues in the debate will be. Their speech will focus on three big issues and show why their side has won those issues.
- The chairs, timekeepers and any other pupils should try to think what the other side might say and come up with rebuttal.

How to Prepare for a Debate

A debate is a civilized argument between two individuals with opposing views. You cannot let your emotions drive your statements nor should you try to be hostile against your opponent. You should properly prepare valid arguments that lean on facts and evidence.

Know your topic

Every debate begins with the moderator assigning the topic. There are always two sides to a debate: the affirmative position and the negative position. Regardless of the position assigned to you, you need to know a lot about the topic in order to debate well. Remember that the foundation of good debating is knowledge. Going to a debate without knowing anything about your topic is like writing a research paper without conducting research. In most cases, the topic will involve a long-standing controversial issue or a recent issue that requires solutions.

Once you receive the topic, do research. It pays to be aware of general knowledge or simply reading various literature if you are a contentious debater. Make sure that your sources are scholarly since unreliable sources will not give you the knowledge you need to do a debate successfully.

Prepare your arguments

Once you have learned enough about the topic, you may proceed to prepare your arguments. Arguments are the points that you advance to defend your position. As you are only at the early stages of preparing for a debate, it's best to write all of the arguments you can come up with. Apart from listing your arguments individually, you can also conduct brainstorming with your teammates. This will help you avoid redundancies as well as synthesize any related arguments.

While you probably will not use all of these arguments due to debate guidelines, being familiar with each and every one of them is still an advantage since this means that you can use any of them if necessary.

Evaluate your arguments

After familiarizing yourself with your arguments, you will need to evaluate their quality. Note that arguments vary when it comes to strength and usefulness. Since you will not be able to use all your arguments, you need to choose only the most important ones. Evaluating arguments is, therefore, useful because it allows you to identify the arguments that will serve as your debate key points. How do you go about determining the quality of an argument? Start by looking at the evidence. The most effective arguments are supported by facts, research findings, and scientific data. Looking at the source of the evidence is also a good way to evaluate the quality of the argument.

For instance, evidence from journal articles, commentary by experts in the field, and statistical findings are excellent evidence that lends your arguments credence. Good arguments are also grounded on logical reasoning. While you may be tempted to use arguments that appeal to emotions, avoid them as much as possible or use them sparingly. Emotionally-charged arguments may be successful in eliciting emotional responses, but they seldom get past more critical judges. Emotional appeal can also be easily torn apart by your opponents, especially if they are armed with hard facts. Since the potency of your arguments is most important, continue reading below to ensure that your arguments are flawless.

Prepare your counterarguments

Learning how to be a better debater, of course, is not complete without preparing your counterarguments. Here are two important tips for debaters: first, never underestimate your opponents; second, assume that they are as knowledgeable and prepared as your team. Remember, one of the most effective debating techniques is attacking the arguments of your opponents in order to break them down and discredit them. This means that you should not just review the arguments that your opponents will use, but you should also formulate counterarguments. Similar to your arguments, your counterarguments should also be logical and supported by excellent evidence.

Ready your refutations

In order to know how to debate effectively, you should also know how to prepare refutations. As discussed earlier, an effective technique is preparing counterarguments meant to contest your opponents' arguments. A good debater, however, is aware that opponents will also prepare counterarguments of their own. You must, therefore, prepare for your opponents' attacks by formulating your refutations. Anticipate the counterarguments that the other side may use against you, and then come up with effective responses to these. Failing to refute your opponents' counterarguments can cost you points. On the other hand, successfully defending your arguments with refutations will not only show the judges that you have prepared for the debate, it will also deal a blow against your opponents' morale.

Prepare your cue cards

At this point, you are required to know your topic and prepare your arguments, counterarguments, and refutations.

Remembering these by heart is ideal, but memorizing these can be overwhelming. You are just human, after all, and you are prone to making mistakes. Address this concern by preparing cue cards. Organize your cue cards and refer to them when you are delivering your statements. Just as how cue cards are used in presentations, your cue cards will serve as your guide so that you do not forget anything or stray away from the topic. Do not forget, though, to write legibly; you do not want to lose time squinting at the cards because they are almost unreadable.

Master the rules

Another vital debate preparation technique is knowing the rules. The concept of debate is simple. Your main task is to convince your audience that your position is correct. But while the concept is simple, the mechanics can be complicated. Debate rules and debate steps vary depending on the mechanics set by your teacher or your organization. What's common among them, though, is their rigidity. Rules are strictly implemented because it will be unfair if debaters are allowed to deviate from these. Learning how to prepare for a debate, therefore, should include thoroughly studying these rules. Bear in mind that teams are penalized for breaking rules. The more familiar you are with the rules, the less likely you are to break them while debating.

Time yourself

One of the most important rules of debating is staying with the time limit. Each member is given an opportunity to deliver their arguments and respond to their opponents. The length of time granted to debaters varies, but it's often just a few minutes. For instance, some debate organizations provide only as few as four to five minutes. Because you have limited time to state your points, you need to manage your time wisely. Learn to debate in a concise and straightforward manner. Avoid being too wordy by using clear and precise language. The time limit is also the reason why you need to choose only your best arguments. Use a stopwatch when practicing so that you can ensure that you deliver everything before you run out of time.

Practice before a mirror

While evidence-backed arguments are the primary tools you use when debating, your presence and demeanor also count. Debating, after all, is a form of public speaking. You should appear calm and confident while debating. Avoid looking discouraged or defeated when your opponents score points, since showing your emotions will only encourage the other side to concentrate their efforts into weakening your morale. Practice before a mirror so that you can observe and improve your body language. Remember that learning to debate is not just a matter of reciting or refuting arguments; it is also about conducting yourself with charisma.

Rehearse

Although debaters are given the floor individually, debating is essentially a team effort. As the saying goes, a team is only as strong as its weakest member. You should encourage each other to be excellent debaters. Study tips on debates together and apply them. Do not be afraid to critique each other. Identifying each other's weaknesses will help you grow together in the long-run. For maximum efficiency, learn how to organize a debate. Then organize a debate between your teammates. For instance, half the team takes one side while the other takes the opposing side. You may then switch sides later. This tactic will familiarize all of you with both sides of the debate. This will also train you in defending your position as the other side looks for holes in your arguments. Such debate techniques will fortify your performance in the actual debate. Remember that the more you know about both sides of the issue, the greater your chance to win a debate.