**HOW TO DEBATE**

**What is Debating?**

A debate is a structured argument. Two sides speak alternately for and against a particular contention usually based on a topical issue. Unlike the arguments you might have with your family or friends however, each person is allocated a time they are allowed to speak for and any interjections are carefully controlled. The subject of the dispute is often prearranged so you may find yourself having to support opinions with which you do not normally agree. You also have to argue as part of a team, being careful not to contradict what others on your side have said.

**The Basic Debating Skills**

**Style**

Style is the manner in which you communicate your arguments. This is the most basic part of debating to master. Content and strategy are worth little unless you deliver your material in a confident and persuasive way.

**Speed**

It is vital to talk at a pace which is fast enough to sound intelligent and allow you time to say what you want, but slow enough to be easily understood.

**Tone**

Varying tone is what makes you sound interesting. Listening to one tone for an entire presentation is boring.

**Volume**

Speaking quite loudly is sometimes a necessity, but it is by no means necessary to shout through every debate regardless of context. There is absolutely no need speak any more loudly than the volume at which everyone in the room can comfortably hear you. Shouting does not win debates. Speaking too quietly is clearly disastrous since no one will be able to hear you.

**Clarity**

The ability to concisely and clearly express complex issues is what debating is all about. The main reason people begin to sound unclear is usually because they lose the “stream of thought” which is keeping them going. It is also important to keep it simple. While long words may make you sound clever, they may also make you incomprehensible.

**Use of notes and eye contact**

Notes are essential, but they must be brief and well organized to be effective. There is absolutely no point in trying to speak without notes. Of course, notes should never become obtrusive and damage your contact with the audience, nor should they ever be read from verbatim. Most people sketch out the main headings of their speech, with brief notes under each.

When writing notes for rebuttal during the debate, it is usually better to use a separate sheet of paper so you can take down the details of what the other speakers have said and then transfer a rough outline onto the notes you will actually be using.

Eye contact with the audience is very important, but keep shifting your gaze. No one likes to be stared at.

**Content**

Content is what you actually say in the debate. The arguments used to develop your own side’s case and rebut the opposite side’s. The information on content provided below is a general overview of what will be expected when you debate. The final logistics of how long you will be debating, how many people will be in your group, and how the debate will unfold (ie: which team speaks first etc.), will all be decided by your tutorial leader.

**The Case - Affirmative**

**Introduction**

The case your group is making must be outlined in the introduction. This involves stating your main arguments and explaining the general thrust of your case. This must be done briefly since the most important thing is to get on and actually argue it. It is also a good idea to indicate the aspects of the subject to be discussed by each of the team members. The introduction is intended to get the audience’s attention and to introduce the subject

**Definitions of the resolution** (if you decide it is needed)

Depending on the topic, the words may be ambiguous. Providing definitions theoretically gives the Affirmative a slight advantage. Define the terms of the resolution fairly– prevent ambiguity.

**Present the Affirmative need**

The needs are compelling reasons that will justify your position.

**Present evidence**

Each position, ideally should have should have evidence. The position should be stated, then described, and finally evidence should be offered in support of the position. Just because you understand your position, do not assume the audience does.

**Conclusion** - briefly summarize what your group has said and why.

**The Case – Negative**

**Introduction**

Same as above

**Definitions of resolution** (if you decide it is needed)

If the Affirmative has failed to define any key terms of the resolution, you may offer definitions. If the Affirmative definitions are absolutely illogical or unreasonable, you must contest them by providing compelling reasons to reject them. Otherwise, it is assumed that your team is in complete agreement with the terms as defined.

**Present the Negative need**

The needs for change must be given to justify your position.

**Present evidence**

Same as above

**Conclusion**

Same as above

**Rebutal / The Clash**

* Did the opposing side lack evidence for its main points; were the arguments factually, morally, or logically flawed
* Flowing to the other side (proving the opposite argument)
* Is the argument more opinion than factual

**The Process**

1. 4 minutes a side
2. 1 minute team discussion. At this time the opposing team may ask the other team one
3. question.
4. 2 to 3 minute rebuttal. You may answer the question and defend your position

**Grades:**

* Review the rubic
* Each team member must participate – if not equally, grades will reflect the difference.
* Review basic debate skills