Online Debate Guide

What is Academic Debate?

Debate is an 'intellectual sport' that trains critical thinking, argumentation, spontaneity, teamwork and acquiring information and knowledge on the most important topics regarding current world political, economical and social affairs. Debating is, first and foremost, an act of persuasion. Regardless of the methods and techniques we use, the purpose is to generate constructive discourse and to convince people of our ideas and ideals. In academic debate we strive to convince using arguments, reasoning, language and emotions, in the context of fair-play, objectivity and impartiality.

The most common medium for debates is 'live/face to face' debating. However, in recent times, written forms of debate are very popular, whether unstructured or ad-hoc (on social media, blogs etc) or structured (on dedicated platforms, such as our own).

Have in mind that the debate is interactive and user friendly and will engage you in constructing and supporting your arguments on a wide range of topics.

Terminology

In order to have a common vocabulary among all the participants, there are a couple of key terms that will be useful throughout the debates. These terms are:

- **Speaker** - part of a debate team, also known as "debater".
- **Speech** - the arguments each speaker delivers (in text, maximum of 3000 characters per speech.).
- **Team** - a team consists of two speakers (or debaters).
- **Round** - every round consists of one or more written debate matches.
- **Motion** - the topic or subject that the 2 teams must debate.
- **Affirmative team** - the team that has to prove that the motion is beneficial or it's implementation is desirable (also known as "Government" or "Proposition").
- **Negative team** - the team that has to prove that the motion is not beneficial nor it's implementation desirable (also known as "Opposition").
- **Adjudication** - the process through which an adjudicator (or judge) decides a winning team and gives a justification for the result.

Format and calendar

The online debate competition will feature 16 teams, 8 from Romania and 8 from Greece. The 16 teams will debate in 4 elimination rounds, with each winning team progressing to the next round. Each round will take around 7 days from the moment the motion is announced to the final result given by the judge.

How the rounds are structured:

- Round 1 (**placeholder start date**): 16 teams debate in 8 matches.
- Round 2 (**placeholder start date**): The 8 winning teams will debate in 4 matches.
- Round 3 (**placeholder start date**): The 4 winning teams will debate in the semi-finals.
- Round 4 (**placeholder start date**): The finals will feature the 2 teams that won all their previous rounds.

Calendar for the competition and rounds:

For each debate, there will be a motion or subject that is given to the participants, at which point they will have 24 hours of preparation.

The team that will open the debate will be known as the Affirmative team and their first post with be the 1st Affirmative. The logical sequence of the answers will be:

- 1st Affirmative -> 1st Negative -> 2nd Affirmative -> 2nd Negative

Bear in mind that you will have 24 hours of preparation time in-between each speech. If a speech is posted before the 24 hours have elapsed, the opposing team's preparation time will still start when the 24 hours expire.

Step by step of debate matches:

1. For each round, a motion (or subject) will be announced and the teams will have 24 hours to prepare until **the 1st debater of the Affirmative team must post their speech (in text form, maximum of 4000 characters per speech, without spaces).**
2. Once the 24 hours have elapsed and the 1st Affirmative debater has posted their arguments, the Negative team will have 24 hours to post a response (**1st Negative**)
3. After the 24 hours have elapsed and the Negative team has posted their response, the **2nd Affirmative debater** will have another 24 hours to post their teams' final speech.
4. Once the 24 hours have elapsed and the Affirmative team has posted their response the **2nd Negative debater** has 24 hours to post a response.

5. ***After all the teams have posted their 4 speeches, the judge will have 48 hours to render a verdict and a justification.***

Team and speaker roles:

Each team is composed of two players. The **team roles** in a debate are clear: the affirmative team must prove the motion to be true or its implementation desirable, while the negative team must in opposition prove that the motion is untrue or its implementation is undesirable. At the same times, both teams must interact with each other's content and counter the arguments being made, whilst also providing their own substantive case.
IMPORTANT: Written speeches can have a maximum of 4000 characters (without spaces).

Speaker roles:

- The 1st affirmative debater has to interpret the motion and its terms, if necessary, and present the constructive case for their team, consisting of argument(s) that prove the motion.
- The 1st negative debater has to rebut the arguments made by the 1st affirmative speaker and bring his own interpretation and argument(s) that disprove the motion.
- The 2nd affirmative debater must reconstruct the arguments that were rebutted by the 1st negative speaker and further develop the affirmative arguments or bring new arguments to support the motion.
- The 2nd negative debater must rebut the reconstructed arguments of the 2nd affirmative speaker and reconstruct the negative team arguments that were refuted in the previous affirmative speech. New arguments on the 2nd negative speaker are discouraged, because there is no time in the debate for the affirmative team to respond to them.

Rules and points guide:

Each speech will be scored on a 1 to 30 scale, in 3 categories: **content** (argumentation), **style** (the manner of presentation of the content) and **strategy** (how the team approaches the motion and what arguments are prioritized).

- **Content (40% of the total score)** means the actual arguments provided by the speaker in support of the motion, as well as the quality of refutation. Elements that count towards content are logical links, examples, reasonability, context, relevance of arguments and so on. Content is graded on a scale of 1 to 12, with 1 being the lowest score and 12 being the highest. 6-7 is the average score for a debater that fulfills the basic role required of him or her in said debate.

- **Style (30% of the total score)** represents the ability of the debater to present his or her arguments in a persuasive manner, using an appropriate and impactful vocabulary, as well as diverse figures of speech, such as analogies. Style is graded on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being the lowest score and 9 being the highest. 4-5 is the average score for a debater that fulfills the basic role required of him or her in said debate.
- **Strategy (30% of the total score)** represents the ability of the debater to choose the best approach towards proving or disproving a motion, prioritizing arguments as well as counter-arguments. Strategy is graded on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being the lowest score and 9 being the highest. 4-5 is the average score for a debater that fulfills the basic role required of him or her in said debate.
- Speeches that go significantly over the character limit will receive a 1 or 2 in the strategy category (depending on the amount of characters over the limit). If the character limit is not respected overall (4000 characters, without spaces), you can be docked points in the strategy category, depending on the situation.

Academic Debate resources:

At the following links you will find some reading material and YouTube videos that tackle various aspects of Academic Debating. Some of these talk about different touch upon different debate formats, but the general principles of debating and argumentation can apply universally to any type of debate:

- Reading materials
  https://drive.google.com/open?id=1cek1GdNUg3mc8yGJ5FjRJ8_QFUzsbNBY
- "How to Create Effective Arguments" by Alfred Snider
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qoj_mRG2JUE
- "Case Construction and Tactics", by Meredith Prior
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j90uYCNSuMU

For any questions or information on the rules and guidelines please contact Radu Tiganas at radu.tiganas@ardordebate.org