

How to debate

A guide for pupils taking part in the IAPS Debating Competition.

What is a debate?

A debate is a structured discussion where two sides argue for and against a topic called a motion.

- One side is called the **Proposition** – they agree with the motion.
- The other side is called the **Opposition** – they disagree.

Each side takes turns to speak. Your job is to give clear reasons, listen carefully, and respond respectfully.

What is the motion?

The **motion** is the statement you will debate.

For example:

“This house believes that video games help children learn.”

If you are on the **Proposition**, you argue *for* it.

If you are on the **Opposition**, you argue *against* it.

Who is in my team?

Each school has a **team of two pupils**. You and your teammate will both speak during the debate and support each other.

You will be joined with another team on your side of the motion, so there are **four speakers on each side**.

What happens on the day?

1. **Round 1** – You will get the motion in advance and prepare at school.
2. **Round 2** – You will find out the motion on the day and have 30 minutes to prepare with your teammate.
3. Each speaker has **5 minutes** to speak.
4. The **first and last minute** of your speech is protected – no interruptions!
5. In the middle 3 minutes, the other side may offer a **Point of Information**.

What is a Point of Information (POI)?

A **POI** is a short comment or question offered by the other team during your speech. They might stand and say “Point of information!”

You can:

- Say “Yes” to let them speak (they have about 15 seconds).
- Say “No, thank you” to continue your speech.

You do **not** have to accept every POI, but you should try to accept at least one. It shows you are listening and confident.

What should I include in my speech?

Here is a simple structure to help you:

1. Introduction

- Say your name and school.
- Say which side you are on.
- Briefly explain your main argument.

2. Main points

- Give 2 or 3 strong reasons with examples.
- Use facts, stories, or things from your own experience.
- Think: Why should people agree with you?

3. Respond

- Mention what someone from the other side said and explain why you disagree.

4. Conclusion

- Summarise your main message clearly.
- End confidently!

Tips for preparing

- ✓ Work with your teammate
- ✓ Make short notes or cue cards (not full scripts)
- ✓ Practise speaking aloud

- ✓ Try to time your speech to 5 minutes
- ✓ Think about the other side – what might they say?

Tips for speaking

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Look up at the audience and judges.
- Use expression and hand gestures (if you like).
- Do not panic if you forget something – just move on.

How will I be marked?

You will get points for:

- Speaking clearly and staying on topic
- Using good examples
- Responding to others
- Working well as a team
- Being persuasive and confident

You do **not** need to be perfect! Just try your best, be respectful, and enjoy the challenge.

Remember...

- Everyone is learning – even the judges started somewhere.
- Debating is about listening as well as speaking.
- It is OK to feel nervous – that means you care!
- Be proud of yourself for giving it a go.

Scoring

Marking will be given to teams that:

- Speak relevantly on their side of the motion.
- Speak without reading from a prepared script.
- Engage with the debate by responding to speeches from the other side of the debate.
- Engage in and respond to points of information (without allowing these to over-run their own speech or intimidate another speaker).

