

World Schools debate

Teams of up to five, three speakers per round, eight speeches, prepared and surprise motions. The format of the World Schools Debating Championship and many national school leagues.

3 vs 3

Proposition and
Opposition

8

speeches: 6 main, 2
replies

8 min

each main speech

4 min

each reply

1 hour

impromptu prep

Speech order

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | 1st Proposition | 8 min |
| 2 | 1st Opposition | 8 min |
| 3 | 2nd Proposition | 8 min |
| 4 | 2nd Opposition | 8 min |
| 5 | 3rd Proposition | 8 min |
| 6 | 3rd Opposition | 8 min |
| 7 | Opposition reply | 4 min |
| 8 | Proposition reply | 4 min |

Bells: single at 1:00 and 7:00 (POI window), double at 8:00 (time). Replies are given by the 1st or 2nd speaker, and Opposition replies first.

Points of information

- Offered by the other side between the 1st and 7th minute of a main speech.
- None in the first or last minute (protected time), and none in replies.
- Stand and say "Point of information". The speaker accepts or declines.
- Keep it to about 15 seconds. Aim to accept one or two per speech.

Motions

Prepared: announced weeks before the tournament, so teams can research.

Impromptu: announced one hour before the round; teams prepare alone, without coaches or the internet.

Shapes: This House would (a policy), believes that (a judgment), regrets (looking back), supports or opposes (a trend).

Tips and common mistakes

- **Engage, don't read.** Style is 40% of the mark.
- **Answer the best version** of the other side's argument.
- **Third speakers:** two or three big clashes beat a list of everything said.
- **Reply speakers:** be fair; no new arguments.
- **Impromptu prep:** agree on the definition and split first, then build arguments.

Before the round

- ☐ Definition and model agreed
- ☐ Team split decided
- ☐ Two or three strongest arguments per side listed
- ☐ Likely opposition arguments and answers ready
- ☐ Who gives the reply speech decided
- ☐ Timer and POI signals agreed

What each speaker does

PROPOSITION

1st Proposition

Defines the motion and the model, sets what Proposition must prove, gives the first arguments and the team split.

OPPOSITION

1st Opposition

Accepts or fairly challenges the definition, rebuts 1st Proposition, sets Opposition's stance and first arguments.

PROPOSITION

2nd Proposition

Rebuts Opposition's strongest points, rebuilds the case, adds the rest of the team's arguments.

OPPOSITION

2nd Opposition

Rebuts Proposition's case, defends and extends Opposition's case with new arguments.

PROPOSITION

3rd Proposition

Rebuttal organized around the main clashes. No big new arguments; new examples and analysis are fine.

OPPOSITION

3rd Opposition

Same job: clash by clash, why Opposition is ahead. Last chance to answer Proposition in depth.

BOTH SIDES

Reply speeches

A look back at the whole debate by the 1st or 2nd speaker: the key questions and why your side won them. No new arguments. A fair, calm comparison scores best.

How judges score

CATEGORY	WEIGHT	WHAT IT COVERS	MAIN SPEECH	REPLY
Style	40%	How it is said: clarity, pace, eye contact, persuasion	24 to 32	12 to 16
Content	40%	What is said: arguments, evidence, rebuttal	24 to 32	12 to 16
Strategy	20%	Structure, timing, grasp of the key issues, POIs	12 to 16	6 to 8
Total	100%	70 is an average main speech; 35 an average reply	60 to 80	30 to 40

The team with the higher total wins the judge's vote; a panel decides by majority.

Key terms

Model

Proposition's plan for how the motion would work.

Team split

How a team divides arguments between speakers.

Protected time

First and last minute of a main speech; no POIs.

Burden

What a side must prove to win.

Clash

A point where the two sides directly disagree.

Squirreling

An unfair definition used to dodge the real debate.

Flow sheet

Note each argument as it is made, and the other side's answer next to it. Print as many copies as you need.

PROPOSITION ARGUMENTS	OPPOSITION RESPONSES	WHO IS WINNING IT?