

What is Debating?

By definition, a debate is a speaking situation in which opposing theories are offered as possible solutions to a problem or question; the proponents of each theory attempt to convince judges and audience that their approach is preferable to that presented by their opponents.

To some people, debating is just a game in which one side tries to win an argument by out-witting, out-acting or simply out-shouting the other. To others, it is just an academic exercise in futility involving pedantic, semantic hair-splitting. But to us, debating is the essence of education. To those involved in our programmes, it is an exciting experience exposing participants to novel ideas, different ideals, important information, interesting individuals, and cultural exchange through travel.

What do Debaters do?

Those involved in our programmes have taken part in debating tournaments, workshops, seminars, panel discussions, debatathons, radio and cablevision series, impromptu speaking and oratorical competitions, summer camps and cultural exchanges with other areas. Besides the traditional Academic format, we have employed Cross-Examination, Direct Clash and Parliamentary styles of debate, as well as staging mock trials, Kingfisher Courts, Model Parliaments, U. N. General Assemblies, and town and city council sessions. Some debates are prepared, others impromptu; some matches are in regular school teams, others are “co-ordinate”, mixing teammates from different schools. Debate topics range from serious political, economic, social and moral issues to light, humorous and even irreverent resolutions!

What does Debating do for You?

Debating requires you to analyze a proposition, investigate its implications, develop cases both for and against a resolution, research the subject thoroughly, collect and organize the evidence, think rationally and argue logically - on your feet, defend your position and destroy that of your opponents, and speak and act convincingly.

These skills will help you to develop self-control, self-confidence and poise; improve your powers of persuasion and your ability to communicate effectively; motivate you to co-operate and co-ordinate your efforts with the work of colleagues; increase your interest in, tolerance of and appreciation for other people’s ideas and opinions; and instil in you an orderly process of problem-solving and decision-making. Besides assisting participants to realize their full personal potential, debating benefits society by developing leadership and the informed, interested electorate so essential to a democracy.

What is the Nova Scotia Debating Society?

The Society is a non-partisan educational organization incorporated in 1972 under the provincial Societies Act. Our membership is open to educational institutions and interested individuals. To contact us, write to the Society at 56 Lorne Avenue, Dartmouth, N. S. B2Y 3E7, e-mail debate@accesscable.net or telephone (902) 466-8424.

The Society is a non-profit, volunteer organization. We are a registered charity recognized by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and our fund-raising activities have been approved by the Better Business Bureau. Our funding comes mainly from affiliation fees, tournament registration fees, and donations from private individuals. We also enjoy facilities provided by schools and universities.

The Society encourages debating among Nova Scotians; co-ordinates allied activities throughout the province; and sponsors camps, workshops, coaching clinics and tournaments, in addition to taking teams to regional, national and international events. The Society is a member of the Canadian Student Debating Federation, which has similar affiliates in most other provinces and territories, and which sponsors annual National Seminars and enters teams in international competitions. Nova Scotian delegates to these events have been regionally representative and have achieved considerable competitive success: in both debating and public speaking, some of our students have won Canadian, North American and even World Championships!