

D E B A T E

A Guide for Canadian Students

Fifth Edition

2005

by

Clevie Wall

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Clevie Wall

Thank you, A. I. E.!

After the second edition of this handbook was printed, the Atlantic Institute of Education was closed. Before ceasing operations, however, the Institute generously assigned copyright in the text to the Nova Scotia Debating Society and gave the Society its remaining supplies of the publication.

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*John D. Filliter,
Provincial Co-ordinator,
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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 others that their approach is preferable to that presented by their opponents.

Debate and the Individual

Debating requires students to analyze a proposition, investigate its implications, develop cases both for and against the resolution, research the subject thoroughly, collect and organize the evidence, think rationally and argue logically on their feet, accurately observe and record their opponents' case, and speak and act in a convincing manner.

These skills will help students to develop self-control, self-confidence, and poise; improve their powers of persuasion and their ability to communicate effectively; motivate them to co-operate and co-ordinate their efforts with the work of colleagues; increase their interest in, tolerance of and appreciation for other people's ideas and opinions; and instil in them an orderly process of problem-solving and decision-making.

Nova Scotia Debating Society

Debate and Society

Modern democratic government simply cannot function without the rational processes of discussion and debate. The alternative to peaceful change through discussion and debate must be rapid change through force and violence. As between these alternatives, our choice is clear.

Democracy implies that the final responsibility for the making of all decisions on public matters must rest with the people. Somehow they must acquire knowledge on public issues; they must arrive at conclusions on these issues; they must transmit these conclusions to those who represent them at all levels of government - local, provincial, and national.

What goes on constantly in a free society is something like this: public issues arouse public advocacy; public advocacy informs and educates the people; public opinion develops on the issue; public opinion is communicated to all levels of government; decisions are finally reached. The assumption is that an informed public can and will make wise decisions.

In fact, debate is the very fibre of the airing and settlement of disputes and controversies at all levels of public life.

Gerry Punké, former Atlantic Co-ordinator,
Canadian Student Debating Federation

Debate and Education

As teachers, our concern is not with debate as an activity which exists in and for itself, but with debate as a vehicle for realizing many of the objectives inherent in our programmes. Given this emphasis, debate is viewed not as one more activity clamouring for inclusion in already crowded curricula but as an additional method available to teachers at appropriate moments to realize clearly understood objectives.

Ray Jeffrey, former President,
Canadian Student Debating Federation

Why Debate?

Why Coach Debating?

Our world of advanced technology has been aptly described as a “talking world”. The spoken word is one of the most powerful forces in our lives. It is important that we are able to think analytically and logically and to express our ideas clearly, precisely and accurately. The use of educational debate (in both the curricular and the extra-curricular sense) in our schools could be a major force in helping us to better achieve more desirable results in these areas.

Recently an increasing importance has been attached to the role that verbal expression of ideas by students plays in the process of education. Coupled with the growing trend towards pupil-centred teaching and the desire to strengthen basic skills, this gives a new significance to the use of debating as a teaching technique.

Debating is essentially an educational method relevant to practically all academic classes. It can be an effective tool for integrating the knowledge and skills of many courses. Being free of particular subject matter, it can be used as a vital part of the total education process rather than just an addition to classroom instruction. There are sufficient variations of debating styles, some more formal and demanding than others, that finding a format which appeals to a group and is appropriate for a specific situation should not be difficult.

The skills learned by students through debate activities will serve them well in life. Ability in research along with skills in *organizing, reasoning, listening, and speaking* are developed through participation in debate activities. *Attitudes of self-confidence, objectivity, and self-discipline* are promoted among debaters through their activities. New dimensions of knowledge come to the students as they increase their understanding of ideas through exploration and attempt to relate their findings to life situations.

Techniques such as role-playing in debate settings allow students the opportunity to develop an awareness of the feelings and responsibilities of others while providing an arena in which to display and test their ideas and opinions.

The tentative conversations which are inherent in debate preparations also help students to test theories and opinions and develop methods for communicating clearly with others.

Students who participate in debate receive practical training in the field of *logic*. Challenging topics promote *independent thought* and *investigation* and help develop in the students the ability to *think clearly, critically* and *analytically*.

The reflective thought process essential to proper debate technique reinforces in the student the necessity of examining ideas and seeking solutions in a logical sequence. The student of debate learns to be a systematic observer, a critical listener and a careful evaluator. Debaters also try to develop the skills to tailor their remarks to suit the needs and understanding of an audience. This ability to adapt ideas spontaneously is developed through experiences in a variety of debate settings.

In both curricular and extra-curricular activities it is important in the initial stages that the emphasis be placed on participation and enjoyment rather than on mastering specific skills. Attention to technique should never overshadow the importance of content. Those directing students in debating should be careful to provide the debaters with feedback that is positive and encouraging after each debate.

The debate format is designed to ensure equal participation by all students, to promote co-operation, and to discourage monopolization of discussion time. Hopefully it will encourage respect for others and tolerance of many viewpoints. Debate offers an opportunity to draw out some of the shy students and allow them to express their ideas. Often students who had lacked confidence in their own ability will discover that others respect their opinions and want to listen to them.

Debate should enhance the social environment of the classroom and offer a framework within which students can interact in a positive fashion.

* * * * *

TO TALK IS HUMAN;

TO DEBATE, DIVINE !

SECTION A

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the debater is to effectively communicate the strongest case to support contentions in the allotted time. To become competent, a debater goes through several stages of preparation: learning the fundamental skills, researching, building constructive cases, framing negative arguments, presenting a position, rebutting and refuting ideas and communicating those ideas effectively to others.

In this booklet an attempt is made to explain, in a sequential order, the processes through which a student should move in preparing any debate. The steps suggested can be adapted for use in either curricular or extra-curricular debating and should provide a model for learning either form. The amount of time and effort put into the preparation for a particular debate should be determined for the purposes and significance of that debate.

In curricular debating, the focus will be generally on the content rather than the format; in extra-curricular debating, both content and format should be stressed. A good working knowledge of the rules of a particular debate format facilitates the flow of the match and helps to make the debater feel at ease with the content.

In the extra-curricular situation, where the development of competence in specific debating skills is the main object of the experience, each debate might focus on a new area of concentration. In this way, in each successive event, skills may be built on the previous experiences of the debaters.

Skill in debating, as in other arts, is increased through practice. Students interested in acquiring competence in this field should participate in debate activities as often as possible. Observing fellow debaters and discussing their debates together is an inseparable feature of the learning process and should be encouraged. It is also desirable for students to discharge as many of the roles of debating as possible: judging, chairing, timing and organizing. Much of value for the student's own debating technique can be learned by judging someone else. A better perspective on the entire process will be gained if the student is aware of all the functions of debating.

Debating skills can be acquired through a variety of types of events: e.g., tournaments, non-competitive meets, co-ordinate team activities. All these can be carried on within or among classes, schools and regions.

In co-ordinate team debating, the debaters are arbitrarily assigned team-mates and given a short amount of time to prepare their cases. This style of debate puts students in the position of having to work on a co-operative basis with team members who may be from other classes, schools or areas.

In a competitive debate format, normally there are two sides. The rules call for one side (the affirmative) to prove the resolution and the other side (the negative) to rebut the affirmative case. The negative team may propose a counterplan, in which case the burden of proof shifts to that side. Keeping this in mind, the overall strategy of both teams is to present as reasonable and appealing a case as possible to judges, audience and opposition. The principal and most basic tactic is to occupy the moderate position and force one's opponents into an extreme posture.

An example of the type of case that an affirmative team should use can be seen in Parliamentary debate. (A Parliamentary resolution must be a proposition of policy, that is, advocate a changed course of action.) There the traditional government case is (1) to show the need for a change, (2) to present a plan consistent with the resolution which will accomplish this change, (3) to show that the plan does not create more problems than it solves, and (4) to demonstrate that its plan is superior to any alternatives.

The affirmative should clearly define what is excluded from its case and what it does not assume responsibility for proving. For example, in the question "Are Nova Scotian teachers underpaid?", the affirmative, when defining "Nova Scotian teachers", should state the specific meaning of the term. Does it include teachers in private schools? in recreation programmes? in community schools? Is it limited to those employed in the public schools of the province?

From the negative point of view, the team should start out with the observation that there is no onus of proof on them unless they propose a counterplan. With that in mind, they should identify all the elements essential to proving the proposition. They must choose with regard to each such element whether to concede it or challenge it. By making intelligent concessions they can concentrate on the weakest links in the affirmative chain of proof.

As an example, the opposition in a Parliamentary debate must first decide whether to defend the *status quo* or admit there is some need for a change. If they concede some need, they may argue that the programme proposed by the resolution is not feasible, or that it would be more practical to make minor alterations to the existing system rather than to subject it to radical revision.

The negative may also adopt the "scattergun" (or categorical denial) approach, in which they admit nothing and place the affirmative in the position of having to provide proof of every point in its case. The total attack strategy is most suitable in the instance when the debater recognizes a weak affirmative case. The debater concentrates on demolishing all affirmative arguments, showing that the plan is not workable, it is unsound, it would not fulfill needs, and it would create a worse situation than the existing one.

Finally, the negative may propose an alternative solution to the problems the resolution is designed to solve. If the negative proposes such a counterplan, it must do so in its first speech. The negative then assumes the burden of proving that there is a need for change; that its plan will solve the present problems, and that the counterplan is superior to both the resolution and any other alternatives that the affirmative might suggest.

In this case, the affirmative has the option of continuing to attempt to prove the resolution (in which case the negative must discharge the above requirements) or it may elect to deny the need for a change and adopt a “shotgun” defence.

A clear understanding of these strategies is essential to the debater when arguments are being prepared. The best course in a specific debate will not always be clearly one strategy or another, but often will be combinations of several. Debaters should keep in mind which one or ones they intend to employ as a framework when formulating their plan of attack.

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Tactics

- Begin on a positive note. Develop a situation which encourages agreement.
- Make your best points first. Do not over-emphasize minor details.
- Always attack opponents’ arguments at the first opportunity.
- Do not exaggerate under any circumstances.
- Listen to every word your opponents say: take nothing for granted.
- Be on your best behaviour - be charming and sincere.
- Never lose your temper.
- Never underestimate your opponents.
- Never give up - debates have been lost by one slip of the tongue.
- Lay logical traps for your opponents. Create diversions.
- Never argue with the moderator.
- Know the rules, and never break them. But be prepared to delete material
... in case a Point of Order goes against you.
- Observe the audience and adapt your speech to its moods.
- Know your “game plan” before you begin to debate.

The procedures and rules of debate help ensure ethical debating. Judges, through the use of penalties, are able to promote proper tactics. But in the final analysis, each debater must be responsible for his own behaviour and must be aware of the need for scrupulously observing high ethical standards at all times. A debater should never compromise his intellectual integrity, regardless of the temptations to win.

Debaters must realize that they cannot and will not always win their debates and that satisfaction comes from a well-fought debate, whether won or lost. Courtesy and respect must be shown at all times, not only to colleagues and audience but also to the opponents. Unethical practices (e.g., quoting material out of context, deliberately falsifying information, making personal attacks on an opponent, or participating in a debate without adequate preparation) should be penalized strongly by judges and debaters must learn to avoid such practices at all costs.

A tournament invitation should include the topic, place, time, speaking times, styles of debating to be used, number of rounds, eligibility rules, fees required, awards (if any), and provisions for lodging and meals.

The host school is usually responsible for providing billets, speakers, judges, timers and materials (scripts, score sheets, etc.) for the sessions, although the schools involved may agree to share these duties.

Participants in such events should make every effort to comply with the rules and directions of the tournament organizers. Debaters ought to be thoroughly familiar with the rules of debate and be careful to abide by them. In co-ordinate style debating, as well as in team debating, team spirit should guide debaters to be courteous to fellow debaters and to debate fairly, honestly and up to the level of their ability at all times.

Those who are billeted should remember that billetees are entitled to every courtesy from their guests. Rules of behaviour (curfews, policies about smoking, etc.) must be clear and debaters must abide by them.

The host school should attempt to obtain publicity through newspapers, radio and television to promote general interest in the debate programme.

SECTION B

PREPARING TO DEBATE

(a) Analysis of the Resolution

The student should begin a systematic analysis of the resolution as soon as it is received to prepare the way for a research program.

The first step in this process is to isolate all the constituent elements in the resolution. For example, in the resolution “Youth is too precious a commodity to be wasted on the young”, the affirmative must prove (1) youth is a commodity, (2) youth is precious, (3) youth can be ‘wasted on’ the ‘young’, and (4) youth is too precious to be so wasted. The negative should point out to the judges the full extent of the affirmative responsibilities and emphasize that even if the affirmative proves three of these points, it will lose the debate if it fails to prove the final element.

In the case of an absolute resolution (e.g., “All men are created equal.”), if the negative proves the existence of one exception, it wins. Hence resolutions should be examined immediately to determine exactly what the affirmative must prove.

Definitions

“When **I** use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.”

“The question is”, said Alice, “whether you **can** make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is”, said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master - that’s what the question is.”

- *Through the Looking Glass*,
Lewis Carroll

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, (Cambridge, Ontario: Whitman Golden Limited, 1981), page 164-165.

(b) Definition of Terms

The next step in the debate process is to define the terms in the resolution. Prompt and precise interpretation of the proposition by both teams is a prerequisite to proper preparation and presentation of a debate.

The one issue inherent in every debate is a dispute over the meaning of the resolution. If two teams interpret the resolution to mean two entirely different things, the only clash would be over definitions. In this instance, the only criterion on which the debate could be judged would be which team better defined the terms. Accordingly, teams must be prepared to debate and defend their definitions of the resolution.

When a team realizes that it has little chance of winning a debate by using a normal interpretation of the resolution, it is likely to resort to wily definitions. Debaters must be ever alert to this possibility and ready to attack such “squirreled” definitions on the basis that they are unfair, obsolete, irrelevant, unreasonable, or patently absurd. They should spell out and support the ordinary meaning of the resolution and suggest to the judges that their opponents are acknowledging defeat by refusing to debate the actual resolution. For example, debaters who defined “New Year’s resolutions” as “residents of Resolution Island who were born on New Year’s Day”, ought to have been attacked by their opponents for having presented unreasonable definitions. The negative should have been prepared to propose reasonable alternative definitions for these terms in the resolution.

The rules of debate require the first speaker for each team to deal with definitions; the consequences and repercussions of failure to do so can be devastating. Unless the affirmative defines all terms in its first speech, the negative can dictate any reasonable meaning of any undefined words. The negative should have such alternative definitions in mind in case the opportunity to introduce them arises.

During its first speech, the negative must challenge any affirmative definitions it intends to contest. If it fails to do so, it is deemed to have accepted the affirmative interpretation and cannot later dispute it. Accordingly, the negative must know before the debate begins what definitions it can concede or accept and still be able to win the debate. It should be prepared to offer alternative definitions if the affirmative offers unfair ones and to prove that the counter-definitions are more reasonable and fair than those of the affirmative. A negative team must challenge affirmative definitions which would reduce the resolution to a truism or a tautology; however, negative debaters should not make an issue of definitions unless necessary, since they may lose the sympathy of the judges for stressing trivia.

Steps in Defining Terms

1. Define every word, not just key words. For example, in the resolution “A teacher’s work is never done”, if “a” is defined in the singular sense as opposed to the plural and the negative does not challenge this interpretation, the affirmative has substantially reduced its burden of proof. The negative, needless to say, should not concede this definition.
2. Research the history of each word and its colloquial and technical connotations. A debater should be prepared to point out that his opponents’ interpretation is slang, obsolete, uninformed or ignorant of common usage. If a colloquial connotation is used, its proponent should be prepared to support it with evidence of widespread community acceptance and point out that his opponent is out of touch with contemporary communication.
3. Words should be examined, not just individually, but as part of phrases and in the overall context of the resolution. Often a phrase or a group of words has different meanings individually and collectively.
4. Consider defining by:
 - (a) authority - refer to as many sources as possible (not just one dictionary but every available dictionary and thesaurus);
 - (b) example;
 - (c) negation or exclusion;
 - (d) comparison;
 - (e) common usage.

5. Attempt to substitute synonyms wherever possible and to paraphrase the entire resolution.
6. Compile all possible interpretations of the resolution, so that you won't be surprised by unexpected definitions from your adversaries.
7. Select those definitions that are both compatible with your case and defensible.
8. Use complete sentences and good grammar when defining terms.
9. Don't forget to provide the full authority for your definitions.

(c) Preliminary Research

Once definitions have been decided upon, the next step for the debaters is to define the problem which gave rise to the resolution. This can be done through asking a series of questions such as:

- What is the problem?
- What seems to have caused the problem?
- How long has it existed?
- Have solutions been attempted? If so, what were they?
- If so, did they work? Why or why not?
- Why is the problem significant now?
- What views on it are common?

The team should split up to try to find the answer to such questions by referring to general and standard sources (encyclopediae, periodical indices, textbooks, magazines, trade journals, interviews). They should be careful to list all important sources of information so that priorities for later, more thorough research can be established and an equitable division of work between team members can be made. This survey of background information should provide students with a broad understanding of the problems of the resolution. Then judgments can be made concerning the suitability of their potential arguments in the light of past experiences of others.

The process of comparing theories and ideas and the significance of being able to recognize fallacies in reasoning become important to the debaters as they strive to understand and interpret the history of a resolution.

Following preliminary research, the team should reassemble to identify arguments for both sides of the resolution. These should be organized into a form which will *facilitate* further research and, ultimately, rebuttal in the actual debate.

The following format (known as a *Case Sheet*) is recommended:

Case Sheet

Resolution: Be it resolved that _____.

<u>Affirmative or Government Case</u>	<u>Negative or Opposition Case</u>
1. Definitions Word 1 Word 2 ...	1. Counter-definitions Word 1 Word 2 ...
2. The Problem - Need for a Change	2. Admit or Deny
3. The Plan Rebut	3. Attack on Feasibility or Counter-Plan
4. How it will Solve Problems Rebut Rebut	4. Rebut How it will Create Additional Problems Why it is not Worth- while or Feasible

The purpose of the Case Sheet is to provide an outline of the case for each side, pinpoint issues, and enable students to identify areas where rebuttal is needed. By checking (in the centre column) points made by the other side, debaters can immediately see what they should say in their rebuttals. Some coaches advise debaters to steal their opponents' thunder by attacking expected counter-arguments before the other team has had an opportunity to introduce them - but this strategy can be unwise as well as unfair. It is recommended that debaters NOT attack points until the other side has made them, since this might unnecessarily strengthen their opponents' case.

There are no magic formulae for deciding which issues should be held most significant in a specific debate. Debaters should naturally choose the ones appearing strongest in the light of available evidence in selecting arguments for the affirmative case. The negative case, normally, concentrates on the affirmative arguments which seem to be most vulnerable to attack.

(d) Research Techniques

The goal of a debate team is to achieve audience acceptability of its case; therefore they must do all in their power to establish credible arguments through the use of convincing supportive materials or evidence. They must proceed to conclusions using a logical network of thought and well-documented evidence.

A thorough research programme is essential in compiling this evidence. The only evidence which the debater should use in the presentation of a case is that which will withstand careful scrutiny. Some guidelines for locating and deciding upon useful evidence include:

- Use current material.
- Use a wide variety of sources.
- Keep a careful record of all research.
- Locate facts and opinions on all sides.

Debaters must be prepared to document their evidence. If they are not, they may be required to withdraw it, the judges may disregard it, or they may be disqualified for fabrication. All recorded evidence should be double-checked for accuracy and precision so that debaters protect themselves against errors or charges of unethical debating.

Each piece of evidence the debater decides might be useful should be examined carefully for strength and validity. The researcher must strive to understand all evidence in its original context. The debater must guard against generalizing from an insufficient quantity of material.

While researching, the debater should make use of school, university and community libraries and learn to use card catalogues, reserve reading rooms, periodical collections, vertical files, stacks and information centres in an effort to locate sources of materials on the topic. There are a number of useful reference books which should be consulted, including encyclopaediae, dictionaries, fact finders and world affairs almanacs. In researching current topics, debaters should read newspapers, news magazines, government documents and journals, and listen to radio and television reports related to their subject. Personal interviews with members of the general public and those considered to be experts in the particular subject of debate often provide useful and interesting information.

Visual aids (charts, pictures, etc.), examples, statistics and comparisons should be employed by debaters if their use clarifies or adds impact to the ideas being communicated.

Ordinarily the most successful debater is the one who has a deeper knowledge of the resolution being debated than does the opposition. Therefore, the debater should strive to research in sufficient detail the total case item by item, to appreciate the inter-relationships among issues, and to convey an understanding of the case to the audience clearly and concisely.

In order to present a good debate, the debater must be able not only to *collect* materials for the case but also to *select* the appropriate information to use in the presentation and to *organize* it into a convenient form. Familiarity with the information available on the topic makes these decisions easier.

In selecting information to be used from all the material located, the debater must consider what the effect of the evidence is likely to be not only on the argument but also on the audience. The information may have to be substantiated and the sources defended. The student should attempt to evaluate the reliability of any materials being considered for use by checking the reputation of the author and the publisher and should not hesitate to ask an instructor or librarian to help evaluate potential sources.

(e) **Organization of Research**

Outlining information assembled through research is one of the best means of organizing materials to be included in the debate case. This provides an easy system for putting materials in order. Information should be arranged in the most logical and easily understandable fashion, not only for the debaters' benefit, but also for that of those to whom they will present the evidence.

A Sample Note Card

“Be it resolved that it be made illegal to broadcast or publish in Canada any communication from a terrorist.”

Negative: Argument 2.

“He who knows only his side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute him. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.”

Quotation from essay “On Liberty” written in 1854 by famous British philosopher JOHN STUART MILL.

Found at page 263 of *Essential Works of John Stuart Mill*, edited by Max Lerner, published by Bantam Books, Toronto, in 1965.

For purposes of recording, retrieving and identifying evidence, most debaters find a system of note-taking to suit their needs. Small note cards provide the best medium for recording information. These cards can be shuffled, sorted and filed easily and are inconspicuous during the debate.

These cards can be used not only for developing a case during the preparation stages but can also be useful to the debater when delivering the speech and preparing disclaimers and rebuttals. The cards should always be as exact as possible and quotations should be identified clearly as to source. Once their final order has been adopted, it is wise to number cards.

On the cards, the debater should identify the title, author, publisher, date and page for each source of information. Any direct quotation should be copied verbatim with quotation marks and the source should be indicated on the same card. When preparing information, the debater should be careful also to note sources. “An eminent scientist”, “a recently published document”, or other such vague references will impress neither opposition teams nor judges!

If one note card is used for each item of evidence, the debater will find it easy to arrange the order of the material as the speech is being prepared. The adaptation of information to suit new needs as the arguments of the opposition are heard is assisted also. This process of spontaneous adaptation of materials is encouraged further if the debater carries a supply of blank cards into the debate and has them available for planning alterations as well as refutation and rebuttal materials. The debater who is able to adapt examples, anecdotes and statistics to answer those of the opposition will be in a stronger position than the one who delivers a planned speech, oblivious to the opposition’s arguments.

In summary, some tips for using evidence cards are:

- (1) use small “index” size cards - 3” x 5” (consider colour-coding);
- (2) write on only one side of each card;

- (3) state an argument, then the support for it, on the card;
- (4) identify the source accurately;
- (5) learn to read evidence effectively;
- (6) quote only vital information.

There are no general guidelines for the amount of research and evidence required. Time and resources available to the students are the limiting factors to an otherwise open-ended study.

(f) Reasoning

As the debater begins to piece together the evidence found through research, to build a case and draw conclusions, he should be conscious of various forms of reasoning.

While studying methods of reasoning, the debater should study common pitfalls or fallacies and make every attempt to avoid these in arguments and conclusions.

By definition, reasoning is the process of expressing inferences or conclusions in logical or argumentative form. It is a process which moves from what is known to be true to that which is likely to be true.

There are several **basic types of reasoning** by which a debater may combine evidence with reasoning and thereby establish proof for a case:

(1) by sign -

The debater can infer from observable signs that something is so. Example: the increased number of speciality “Jean Shops” can be read as a sign of the popularity of that style of dressing.

Reasoning by sign may be tested through questions such as:

- (a) Is the sign related to the anticipated state or action?
- (b) Are there other signs which may be more accurate predictions?

(2) by cause -

The debater works from cause to effect, asserting that one thing causes another and therefore it is possible to predict effect. Example: the rising cost of fuel can be read as a prediction of potential changes in consumer habits.

Some tests of this type of reasoning include:

- (a) Is the cause capable of producing this effect?
- (b) Is it the only factor accounting for the effect?

(3) by analogy -

The debater makes comparisons based on the idea that if two things are alike in a number of particulars, they will be alike in the point in question. Example: the debater might reason that one who is successful in debating will also be successful as a public speaker because both activities involve similar skills.

This type of reasoning can be tested by asking such questions as:

- (a) Are there essential likenesses between the compared items?
- (b) Are all differences accounted for?

(4) by generalization -

The debater moves from a number of known or observed instances to reach a general conclusion which applies to a whole class. Example: A debater attempting to prove that cosmetics are dangerous would cite numerous examples, covering all types of cosmetics, in which cosmetics are proven to be dangerous, and conclude that cosmetics are dangerous.

Tests for this type of reasoning include such questions as:

- (a) Is there a reasonable number of examples?
- (b) Are the examples typical?
- (c) Are there enough negative examples to disprove the contention?*

* Sources of further information on this topic are included in the bibliography.

The debater should examine all the evidence which has been gathered and proceed from this information to the formation of contentions using a pattern of reasoning which will add credibility and impact to the ideas chosen for presentation.

As mentioned previously, the debater should concentrate much effort on avoiding **fallacies** in reasoning. There are many different types of errors of which a skilled debater should be aware. A few of those more frequently seen in debates are:

- (1) arguments which attack the person rather than the idea;
- (2) begging the question - that is, acting as if an argument is true when, in fact, it is the question of debate;
- (3) the thin edge of the wedge - arguing that to allow a certain action will inevitably lead to more serious consequences;
- (4) oversimplification of a problem;
- (5) false analogy - comparing two things that are essentially not alike;
- (6) hasty generalization - arguments based on insufficient examples.

Refutation and Rebuttal

The debater should learn to recognize and attack faulty arguments and conclusions in an opposing case both while preparing for and during a debate.

Clash, the essential ingredient of debating, is accomplished through **Refutation**, that is, the process of attacking the arguments of opponents and seeking to expose their weaknesses.

Debaters should attempt to prepare themselves for this process through their research and reasoning.

Good listening habits are essential to good refutation: debaters must **listen carefully** to opposing arguments and **accurately record** them in order to effectively attack the errors of the opposition. It is wise to refute opponent's cases at the earliest opportunity (i.e., during a constructive address) rather than saving the attack for an official rebuttal period.

In practice, the debater should develop habits of attacking arguments fairly and specifically and, of course, always be able to support the reasons for the attack. While preparing refutation, the debater should keep in mind some of the typical fallacies commonly found in arguments. These can act as guidelines by which an opponent's case can be judged and will help the debater to be specific in refutation.

It is good to develop a pattern of refutation which will ensure clarity and precision in presentation. Such a pattern should include:

- (a) a restatement of the opponent's arguments;
- (b) a statement of the debater's objections;
- (c) evidence to support these objections;
- (d) a summary of the refutation.

In this text, **Rebuttal** means the reply to refutation and the rebuilding of a case. As with refutation, debaters should attempt to prepare rebuttal concepts in advance through research and reasoning. The preparation of rebuttal is also an integral part of the actual debate. Throughout the debate, a debater should concentrate on listening to and analyzing the opposition's attacks with a view to preparing a rebuttal. Careful notes - whenever possible verbatim quotations from their speeches - should be taken down at this time and used in the delivery of the rebuttal. It is important that a speech of rebuttal end with a brief summary of the case as it is then seen.

An effective method of organizing refutation and rebuttal is by using a Case Sheet (see earlier section on Preliminary Research) on which arguments for both sides are listed in juxtaposition. By checking in the centre column points raised by opponents, the debater can then see at a glance which arguments need further attack or defence and what appropriate responses are.

In refutation and rebuttal the debater must learn the skill of adaptability as well as the ability to think quickly while maintaining accuracy and clarity in communicating with his audience.

(g) Presentation

"I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

(Anon.)

Success in debating hinges on the actual presentation of a debate case to an audience. A debate team is not successful unless its ideas have been communicated effectively and efficiently. It is crucial that a debater be conscious of the principles of good communication. Each speaker must develop a personal, persuasive speaking style. To do this, the debater must learn to speak precisely and with confidence, adding colour and humour when appropriate, and to establish a good rapport with all members of the audience, including the opposition.

In communicating a message to an audience, the debater should concentrate not only on the verbal but also on the non-verbal messages it is to receive. Listening to other participants and reacting to audience feedback are also key components in the art of effective communication.

Choosing Words

The language employed must be appropriate for the audience. Because words are symbols, they can stand for many different things even among people who share common experiences. Any words which are unfamiliar to the audience must be defined clearly: if words are not understood, meaning is not communicated. Even familiar words must be used with clarity and precision.

Finding appropriate language forces the debater into being careful with the use of slang. Slang is a special language used to identify members of a group or their ideas. If a debater uses slang (and it is sometimes the most effective language), care must be taken to ensure that the audience understands its meaning. The debater should attempt to use language that fits the needs, interests, knowledge and attitudes of the audience without being offensive.

The psychological impact of the debater's words should be carefully considered. Audience reactions to certain words and phrases can sway the debate either for or against the speaker. The debater who uses loaded words, or words with shock value, must be prepared for audience reaction. Instead of arousing the audience against an issue, these words often arouse the audience against the speaker.

The speaking style of the debater must be readily comprehensible to be effective. Thoughts must be expressed briefly and simply through specific words.

Specific language helps the debater to control the meanings which the audience will attach to his speech. For example, the audience hearing the word "car" has a wide choice of possible interpretations; the audience hearing "new, butterscotch colour Chevette" has far fewer choices.

Words - the ammunition of the debater - should be chosen with accuracy and concreteness in mind. The debater should be careful to choose from among synonyms, the one which best represents the intended idea. A debater's thesaurus should be well worn.

ORGANIZATION AND TECHNIQUES

The good debater learns to express ideas in such a way that the audience will not only understand the arguments but will follow and accept the reasoning and remember the points which are emphasized by the speaker. The debater's purpose should always be clear and he should adopt principles of suspense, climax, wit and imagery in an effort to build a speech which will contain both interest and impact.

Techniques which may be employed to make meanings more interesting to an audience include:

- using alliteration to draw attention to certain phrases;
- using various word-order patterns (i.e., change the order of subject and predicate) and rhetorical devices for emphasis;
- using figurative language for vividness - similes, metaphors, personification;

- using colourful words rather than routine ones so that the audience will remember the idea.

A diverse vocabulary, appropriately employed, will impress the listeners with the debater's intelligence.

It is important for the debater to try to perceive the effect of a speech from the point of view of the audience. It is important to concentrate on trying to make the ideas as clear, concise and interesting as possible. The debater must remember that, although considerable time has been spent on learning many sides of the argument, those who are listening to it may be hearing the material for the first time.

Delivery

Delivery is the use of the voice and body to help convey the message of the speech. The delivery of the speech may be the deciding factor in the debater's success. For an effective delivery, the debater must try to maximize the effectiveness of voice, articulation, deportment and bodily action. Convincing the audience of a desire to communicate with them through the projection of personality and adaptation of the speech to suit their needs is important to the debater. In determining effectiveness of delivery, voice qualities such as pitch, volume, rate and rhythm are significant factors. The speaker should strive to vary these features to avoid a sing-song effect or conversely, a monotone.

The shaping of sounds into recognizable words is called articulation. The debater must learn to articulate carefully every word used, to avoid slurring sounds or omitting word endings. To be successful, the debater must be understood.

A tidy, natural deportment, suitable to the subject of the debate and the speaker's personality, enhances audience acceptability of the speaker. Exaggerated style detracts from overall effectiveness.

Bodily action serves a key function in the communication of ideas. It stands for words; the nod, the shrug of shoulders, and head shake, help define the meaning of the debater's words. Facial expressions can help achieve a suitable audience response, as can the right gesture, posture and stance. Eye contact helps to establish a bond between the speaker and the audience and increases the audience's confidence in the speaker. The debater should make an effort to look at individuals and small groups throughout the audience while speaking and to observe their reactions and adapt to their responses.

Positive Projection

The debater should try to approach the audience with confidence and project a sensitive and sincere presence. Starting with a smile helps not only to put the speaker at ease but to assure the audience as well. A relaxed audience listens, but if they are worried about whether a nervous speaker will complete an address, the audience misses the message. The best way to overcome nervousness is to concentrate intensely on communicating so that you forget your own self-consciousness.

Debaters should be aware that they must sell themselves in order to sell their ideas. Thus they should strive in every way conceivable (dress, grooming, deportment, attitude) to impress the audience in a favourable manner. If observers like the debater, they will be less critical of the ideas presented.

The debater must also be careful to adapt his speech to suit the needs of the audience as judged from prior knowledge of it and the feedback received during the speech. It should be evident that the interests and knowledge of the audience have been taken into account as the speech was being prepared.

The speaker can move about to retain attention, make greater use of variety, humour and voice in an attempt to use the audience reaction to increase the effectiveness of the presentation.

The safest, and often most effective, form of humour is poking fun at oneself. Debaters are well-advised to try to develop these skills and to observe those who seem to be adept in their use. Not only in formal debating but in all aspects of daily life, a well-developed sense of humour accompanied by a good feeling for rapport will enhance many situations.

Trying to determine what is going on inside the minds of the listeners, and how most easily to influence them, is perhaps the most exciting and intellectually stimulating aspect of debating. This requires psychological sophistication and is the challenge of every aspiring rhetorician.

Possibilities for using various strategies in the area of psychological manoeuvring are limitless and it is here that the drama and intrigue of debating are highlighted.

(h) Language of Debate

Debates may be conducted in any language with which participants are familiar. In Canada, Bilingual Debating requires debaters to deliver at least part of their speeches in French and part in English, since these are the two official languages of the country. You should refer to the rules of Bilingual Debating for the special requirements of this type of debating.

(i) Rehearsal

Debaters should attempt to deliver speeches which show the spontaneity of impromptu speaking, yet allow for careful preparation and practice. A speech which is carefully prepared without being memorized is the ideal.

Speech practice should be undertaken systematically and realistically. To simulate the actual debate situation, the debater should stand in a regular debate room, speak aloud in the presence of others, and encourage heckling and comments on content and style. After delivering the speech and timing it, the debater should evaluate it by asking such questions as:

Did I express the key ideas clearly and precisely?

Did I talk long enough / too long on any point?

Did I clarify all the points of the speech?

If mirrors, tape recorders and videotape recorders are available, the debater should take advantage of them. Analysis of the effect of a speech will be easier if it can be heard or seen again.

During rehearsals the debater should decide such things as how to use notes and visual aids most effectively, what bodily action best suits the speech, and the style of presentation which seems most appropriate.

Practice gives the debater a good opportunity to evaluate, revise and reconsider all aspects of a speech before the time of formal presentation. It also instils confidence in the speaker.

A FINAL WORD

Learning how to debate is like learning any other new activity: it requires patience and practice.

This handbook has examined some of the processes through which a student should move in the preparation of a debate case. In the initial stages the debater should be trained to move carefully through each step in sequence so that skills will be developed in a logical order.

For an impromptu or a less serious debate, it is worthwhile for the student to move quickly through the same questions as for a prepared debate and develop strategy along similar patterns, even though there is time for little or no research.

Debating can be an exciting experience for the student, introducing new ideas, different ideals, important information, and a variety of skills and attitudes essential to personal growth and development. The skills developed in debating provide a sound, systematic and scientific method to test various viewpoints and help the student to develop positive attitudes towards research and study. It helps people learn how to avoid personality clashes and puts the emphasis on testing ideas and conclusions.

Debating offers significant advantages to all participants. Academically, it is invaluable. It offers Canadian students the opportunity to establish new friendships, to meet other students and to travel not only provincially but also nationally and even internationally!

Debaters should not be daunted by initial fears and confusion. After a few rounds of actual debate, the rules will become familiar to them and everything will fall into place.

Finally, an important word to all debaters - **have FUN** while debating!

Appendix A

Some Suggested Topics for Debates

Be it resolved that: (*Omit this preamble when the resolution is in the form of a question. In Parliamentary resolutions, avoid using the word "should".*)

1. All extra-curricular activities be abolished.
2. English classes should devote one period a week to speech communication.
3. Students who receive an A average be excused from final examinations.
4. Graduation credit should be given for certain extra-curricular activities.
5. Girls should help pay the costs of a date.
6. Wives should teach their husbands to drive.
7. A man's worth to society is proportionate to the amount of money he owes.
8. Students should be given one day each month to pursue individual research and study.
9. Federal population controls should be established.
10. It is more desirable to own an eight-cylinder car than to own a six-cylinder car.
11. Tipping should be abolished.
12. Is poverty as great an evil to society as illiteracy?
13. Is a bath better than a shower?
14. Does television programming reflect public taste?
15. Is poverty more an occasion and provocation of crime than wealth?
16. Religion be taught in all the schools in the province.
17. Progress is an illusion.
18. Man should seek commitment rather than freedom.
19. No prophet has more peace than a baby at sleep.
20. Preservation of our natural environment should take precedence over industrial development in (name a place).
21. Youth is too precious a commodity to be wasted on the young.
22. The Federal Government should more strictly regulate all advertising in Canada.
23. Sports allowing violence and aggression be banned from all forms of mass media.
24. The Federal Government should be responsible for the education of Canadian citizens.
25. Unemployment insurance be abolished.
26. Through a policy of racial and cultural integration the Federal Government foster the development of a Canadian identity.
27. The world must ultimately starve.
28. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.
29. Nationalism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.
30. Should foreign unions be permitted to control any activities of Canadian unions?
31. Should Canadian immigration policies be based purely on national self-interest?
32. Cosmetics are dangerous.
33. The Federal Government should pay Canadian wives for their housekeeping services.
34. Should sex education courses be taught to all students before they reach high school?

35. What is good for the pocketbook is good for the heart.
36. The national seat of government be moved to Tancook Island.
37. Man's place is in the kitchen.
38. Snoopy is a war-monger.
39. Ignorance is bliss.
40. Should Santa's elves have the right to strike?
41. Interscholastic sports be abolished.
42. All teachers should retire at forty years of age.
43. ESP is a fraud of modern day quacks.
44. UFO's do exist.
45. Should juveniles be tried in open court?
46. Should the Canadian Senate be an elected body?
47. Should all private automobiles be prohibited from the downtown area of (name a city)?
48. Should major changes be made in the Canada Pension Plan?
49. Should the Welfare System in Canada be significantly changed?
50. Debating tournaments should be banned.
51. To be fit is better than to be fat.
52. Is bilingualism a worthwhile objective for Canadians?
53. Canadian citizens be required to donate 25 hours per year or the equivalent in salary to community service work.
54. Teachers are a hazard to education.
55. The school year be increased to two hundred and fifty days.
56. The celebration of Victoria Day should be abolished.
57. University tuition fees should be abolished.
58. All male teachers should wear suits and ties.
59. Television dictates our way of life.
60. Television violence is addictive.
61. Art is for the few.
62. The ends justify the means.
63. Do fairy tales contribute to violence?
64. Is progress an illusion?
65. Governing bodies be denied all powers of censorship.
66. Genetic engineering be declared illegal.
67. The physically fit should be awarded a tax credit.
68. Canada should adopt one official language.
69. Only peace officers and hunters be permitted to bear arms in Canada.
70. Prostitution be legalized and regulated in Canada.

Appendix B

Some References and Resource Materials for Further Information

1. C. William Colburn, *Strategies for Educational Debate* (Boston: Holbrook Press, Inc., 1972).
2. Ray G. Ewing, *Participating: Public Speaking, Debate and Discussion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975).
3. Dana Hensley and Diana Prentice, *Mastering Competitive Debate* (Caldwell, Idaho: Clark Publishing Company, 1977).
4. Stephen Robb, *Fundamentals of Evidence and Argument, Modules in Speech Communication* (Toronto: Science Research Associates, 1976).
5. Russel R. Windes and Robert M. O'Neil, *A Guide to Debate* (Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walsh, Publisher, 1964).
6. Roy V. Wood, *Strategic Debate* (Toronto: Copp Clarke Publishing, 1968).

For additional information on student debating in your area, contact the Canadian Student Debating Federation or:

Alberta Debate and Speech Association
Debate and Speech Association of British Columbia
Manitoba Speech and Debating Association
Debate/Débat New Brunswick
Newfoundland Federated League of Debaters
Nova Scotia Debating Society
Ontario Student Debating Union
Prince Edward Island Schools Debating Association
Quebec Student Debating Association
Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association
Territorial Debates (Northwest Territories)
Yukon Student Debating Association

Current mailing addresses for these organizations can be obtained from the Nova Scotia Debating Society at 56 Lorne Avenue, Dartmouth, N. S. B2Y 3E7.

The Society also has additional materials on coaching, moderating, timing and judging debates, as well as several pamphlets available, including ones on Academic Style Debating, Direct Clash Style Debating, Cross-Examination Style Debating, Parliamentary Style Debating, and a Kit for organizing Model Parliaments.

Debaterrata

Go placidly amidst the noise and haste but remember what pleasure there may be in heckling. As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with your judges. Speak your truth clearly and quietly and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant opposition, for them you must rebut. They also have a story to tell, and it's an ill wind that blows nobody some good.

Avoid loud and aggressive adversaries: they are vexations to your rhetoric. If you compare yourself with other orators, you may become bitter or vain, for always there will be greater and lesser speakers than yourself. Enjoy your schemes as well as your successes.

Keep interested in your Speaker: however humble, he is a real possession in the changing fortunes of order and personal privilege. Exercise caution in your constructive address, for the opposition is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what honesty there is. Many persons strive for truth and there may be a kernel or two of it in all their corn.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection, rather boredom and utter contempt, toward your opponents. Nor be cynical about the adjudicators, even if they ARE your intellectual inferiors: their disenchanting scores are as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of your coaches, gracefully surrendering those points you stole from your second speaker. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune, such as when you are called to order. But do not distress yourself with the imaginings of the opposition: after all, they too must have SOMETHING to say. And how many of your own contentions were hastily conceived during desperate moments?

Beyond a wholesome discipline of them, tongue-lash the opposition, for they are as ignorant as you. You are a member of this House: no less than the Clerk and the Pages, you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt you are clouding the issues as you should.

Therefore, be at peace with the Speaker. And no matter what your colleagues may tell you during the noisy confusion of the debate, let logic be your guide.

With all its late nights, endless research and embarrassing moments, debating is still a priceless encounter. Be prudent. Strive to survive.

*June 1976
Halifax,
Nova Scotia*

*Apologies to Anonymous and P.-E.
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