

Debating Terms

Debating is essentially a very simple activity - about arguing the rights and wrongs of policies and ideas. However, like many other activities, it has developed over time its own **specialist vocabulary** for otherwise simple concepts. This is a comprehensive glossary of the most commonly used debating terms to help clarify what we do.

Analysis

The logical reasoning behind an argument.

Barrack

To offer points of information too quickly in succession and be disruptive.

Bin

(Being in) a low-ranked room.

Break

(To reach) the knockout rounds of a competition as a speaker or as a judge.

Break Room

Any room in the final preliminary round from which teams could potentially break.

British Parliamentary

The format of the debating competitions we participate in. Now recognised as the international standard.

Burden

The strategic responsibility on a team or side in a debate

Case File

A collection of written material designed to prepare cases for debates.

Chair Judge

The person who controls a debate and manages the adjudication and feedback to teams afterwards.

Chief Adjudicator

The person responsible for ranking judges and setting the motions in the competition. Also known as the CA.

Closed Motion

A motion which involves a clear policy or statement for the debate.

Closed Round

A round where the results of the adjudication is kept secret from teams.

Debating Terms

Closing Government

The second team on the government side. Responsible for extending the government case and summing the debate in favour of the government.

Closing Opposition

The second team on the opposition side. Responsible for extending the opposition case and summing the debate in favour of the opposition.

Composite Team

A team including two speakers not from the same university.

Convenor

The person responsible for organising a debating competition.

Counterprop(osal)

An alternative policy to that of the definition advocated by the opposition.

Crash

Accommodation for speakers and judges at a competition.

Definition

The policy or interpretation of the motion created by the opening government team in the debate.

Draw

The announcement of team positions, judges and the motion before a debate.

EFL

English as a Foreign Language. A category for speakers at Worlds.

ESL

English as a Second Language. A category for speakers at Worlds, Euros and some IVs or Opens.

Euros

The European Universities Debating Championship (EUDC). Held annually during the summer.

Extension

The new material brought by teams in the closing half of the debate.

Government

The side in favour of the motion. Also known as the proposition.

Debating Terms

IONA

Islands of the North Atlantic - used to refer collectively to the UK and Ireland.

IR

International Relations - the interactions between international actors.

IV

A competition involving only teams from universities. Otherwise known as an intervarsity competition.

Knife

When a closing team implicitly or explicitly contradicts the opening team on the same side.

Motion

The statement of the debate.

Open

A competition which allows composite teams along with university teams.

Open Motion

A motion which does not involve a clear policy or statement for the debate and is left to opening government to interpret.

Open Round

A round where the results of the adjudication is announced to teams after the debate.

Opening Government

The first team on the government side. Responsible for defining the motion, presenting arguments in favour of the motion and rebutting opening opposition.

Opening Opposition

The first team on the opposition side. Responsible for presenting arguments against the motion and rebutting opening government.

Opposition

The side against the motion.

Outround

Any knockout round after the break in which only the top teams take part.

Point of Information

A short, quick point of rebuttal made during a speech by a speaker on the opposing side. Also known as a PoI.

Debating Terms

Power Pair

When teams on similar team point totals are drawn to debate against each other. The standard format for most British Parliamentary competitions.

Preliminary Round

A debating round where all the teams take part before the knockout outround.

Prep(aration) Time

The fifteen minutes between the draw and the start of the debate during which teams prepare for a debate.

Proposition

The side in favour of the motion. Also known as the government.

Protected Time

The first and last minute of a speech during which points of information cannot be offered.

Pull Up

To be put in a room with teams on higher team points than you.

Rebuttal

The explanation of why the arguments made by the other side is wrong.

Roll

When the wing judges overrule the chair judge in the adjudication.

Room

The physical location of a debate. Also used to describe the rank of the debate (e.g. top room, break room, bin room etc.)

Speaker Points

Points allocated to individual speakers based on their speech in the debate. Usually marked out of 100. Otherwise known as 'speaks'.

Squirrel

An illegitimate and unreasonable attempt by opening government to restrict or shift a motion.

Straights

When teams have the number of team points equivalent to just getting seconds in all their debates. Often used as a reference point for success (e.g. "Plus one" means the equivalent on straights plus a win etc.).

Strike

When a judge is prevented from adjudicating a team due to a potential bias.

Debating Terms

Summation

The concluding speech on each side, providing a biased summary of the debate.

Swing Team

A reserve team put into the competition to ensure a multiple of 4 teams or when a team is absent.

Tab

The final ranking of speakers and judges in a competition.

Tabmaster

The individual responsible for creating and maintaining the tab and draw throughout and after the competition.

Team Points

Points allocated to teams based on their performance in a debate. Usually 3 for 1st place, 2 for 2nd place, 3 for 3rd place and 0 for 4th place.

Wing (Judge)

A person who assists the chair judge in adjudicating the debate.

Worlds

The World Universities Debating Championship (WUDC). Held annually during the winter.