

THE DEBATING CHEAT SHEET

Manner, Matter, Method

Debating is all about three things – *Matter*, *Manner* and *Method*. These are the three criteria against which you will be scored, and this score determines who will win the debate.

Matter: *What you say.* Matter is all about your material – what your arguments are, whether or not they are thought-out properly, and the evidence you can provide to back them up. In order for matter to be accepted, it must pass two tests: (1) is it **LOGICAL** (i.e. does it make sense), and (2) is it **RELEVANT** (i.e. can it be fully linked back to what your team should be arguing). It also includes the quality of your rebuttal.

Manner: *How you say it.* Manner is how you deliver your speech. It will include anything that enhances your presentation and makes it more engaging: the tone and volume of your voice, how quickly you speak, hand gestures, eye contact, your stance, and how you use your notes (always use palm cards – NEVER an A4 sheet of paper!).

Method: *How you organise it.* Method refers to how you structure your speeches, both individually and as a team. Have you split up your material appropriately between speakers? Does your speech have a beginning (introduction), middle and end (conclusion)? Did you use signposting to highlight your arguments? Do you have a team line? Is everyone on your team have the same understanding of the topic? Ultimately it comes down to this: are you, and your team, ORGANISED?

How you are scored:

	Matter	Manner	Method	Total
Average Mark	30	30	15	75
Total Marks	40	40	20	100

Speaker Roles

First Speaker (Affirmative): The first affirmative must introduce the debate as a whole, not just their team's side. This means that they need to provide a DEFINITION (that is, defining the key terms and the topic as a whole in the MOST REASONABLE way). Secondly, they must introduce your TEAM LINE, which is the overarching argument that your team will be pursuing (try and summarise it in a catchy line). Thirdly, they must show break down what each speaker will be saying in a TEAM SPLIT. Finally, they must introduce at least one POSITIVE ARGUMENT for their team. They will also need to introduce any models you want to use.

First Speaker (Negative): The first negative does not need to provide a definition, UNLESS the affirmative fails to do so or if you disagree with a fundamental aspect of their definition (in the case of a disagreement, the MOST REASONABLE DEFINITION will win). However, they will need to REBUT the substantive points made by the first speaker. Other than this, their role is the same as the first affirmative.

Second Speaker: The second speaker begins with rebutting any important points that the other team has made. Whilst this should not take up more than 25-30% of your time, you MUST rebut. However, you then need to introduce the main arguments for your team. The second speaker will be in charge of

delivering the majority of your team's substantive material, and will need facts, statistics, examples, or other evidence to back up what they are saying.

Third Speaker: The third speaker has to do four things. Firstly, they REBUT. Secondly, they REBUT. Thirdly, they REBUT. And fourthly, they SUM UP. Rebutting should take up most of the third speaker's time. They must rebut the WHOLE of the other team's argument, ideally by grouping together similar arguments and picking them apart all at once. Finally, they must summarise your team's case, reminding the audience of what you have been arguing and why you are right. However, they CANNOT introduce new evidence (unless they are using it to directly rebut an opposing argument).

Rebuttal

Rebuttal is essential to debating, and everyone except the first affirmative will need to rebut. Rebuttal is where you explain the flaws in the other team's arguments. The most effective rebuttals will attack the core of an opposition's argument as being ILLOGICAL or IRRELEVANT to the topic, and it is always better to attack the argument itself rather than the example or evidence they use to back it up. However, you don't always have to argue that the other team is completely wrong: you can also argue that their argument is correct but should be awarded little weight, that the positive outcomes are outweighed by the negatives, that your team's arguments are more likely, and so on. Always remember that you are attacking the points the other team makes – not the opposition speakers themselves – and NEVER use insults.

Dos and Don'ts

- DO plan out your speeches for prepared topics – it is very obvious who has and hasn't done research.
- DO make eye contact, DO use palm cards, and DO use dot points.
- DO use signposting to make it clear what your arguments are.
- DO pass notes to each other during the debate if you come up with a good idea/rebuttal/etc.
- DO sound serious or passionate: your conviction can be very engaging.
- DO pause between arguments: it adds emphasis and makes it easier to follow your arguments.
- Do NOT tell us your names: they will already be on the mark sheet.
- Do NOT say '*and our third speaker will rebut*'. We already know that.
- Do NOT use large sheets of paper: they are extremely distracting.
- Do NOT read out your speech: try to memorise main points and use palm cards.
- Do NOT mention Hitler or Mother Theresa: come up with some interesting, more relevant examples.
- Do NOT attack the other team personally. Criticise the argument, not the speaker.

Some of the most useful websites ever:

Debaters' Association of Victoria: <http://dav.com.au> ← Includes heaps of information on debating, speaker roles, and tips to improve manner, matter and method scores.

Debatatabase: <http://www.idebate.org/index.php> ← Scroll down. See the orange box? That's the debatabase, and it will become your best friend. It has a huge collection of debating topics with a breakdown of affirmative and negative arguments. HOWEVER, you MUST look elsewhere for evidence, examples, statistics, and facts to back up your case.

Debatapedia: <http://debatepedia.idebate.org> ← Wikipedia for debaters. Includes a huge database of topics with pros and cons, evidence and resources.