

OXFORD DEBATE



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OXFORD-STYLE DEBATE TRAINING FOR JUDGES

OXFORD-STYLE DEBATE OVERVIEW

Oxford-style debate features a resolution, or provocative statement, that is supported by one team and opposed by the other. Arguments are aimed at a general audience with participants assuming what a mainstream audience would think as the status quo. There are two teams, an affirmative team and a negative team.

OXFORD-STYLE DEBATE FORMAT

The debate style has three rounds:

- 1. Opening statement:** The affirmative team generally argues against the status quo, for example by stating why a change is needed and why the status quo should be challenged.

The negative team argues in favor of the status quo, for example by poking holes in the affirmative team's argument and explaining why the status quo should stay the way it is. Teams are able to research and prepare their opening statements in advance.

Opening statements should contain an explanation of the topic, acknowledgment of the opposing team's concerns and directly address those concerns.

- 2. Cross-examination:** The moderator of the debate will ask questions to both the affirmative team and the negative team. Questions are based on opening statements and the teams are able to spar with each other during this round.

Speakers should provide clear and convincing answers, refer to points made during opening statements, engage respectfully and not offer pre-planned answers or pivot to other subjects.

- 3. Closing statements:** Each team makes closing statements based on the comments made during the debate. Whereas opening statements are researched and finessed, closing statements are seldom prepared and are more impromptu.

Speakers should clarify any statements that weren't clear in previous rounds and not introduce new information. It should be clear that speakers have noted their opponents' case, refer to these points and rebut any points that have not been fully refuted.

The winner is determined by judges who vote according to which team made the best argument. As judges consider their vote, they may reflect on what they thought at the beginning of the debate compared to what they thought at the end.

TIPS FOR JUDGES:

- Avoid bias on how you personally feel about the subject of the debate and keep an open mind. Your job is to vote on who made the best argument and not whether you personally are on board with the resolution. For example, if you are against the affirmative side, you can still vote for them if you feel they made the stronger argument.
- A judge should feel as though students are making their argument to you and communicating directly to you.
- Factors to consider when deciding which team is making the better argument include:
 - Performance and if the participants are strong orators who make eye contact, enunciate words, and put emphasis and personality behind what they are saying.
 - Look for a thread of logic in their argument and ask if they are building a case for their argument.
 - Consider if it seems as if the team has researched their opening statements well and have evidence to support their statement.
 - Make sure the team members are working in tandem with each other with a lot of teamwork and partner chemistry.

EXAMPLE OF ONLINE FORM FOR SCORING OXFORD DEBATE

Oxford Score Card - Round 1

1. From dropdown choose your name. If not in the list choose other and type name in text field.
2. Select the Affirmative team and then the Negative team.
3. Choose your room number.

Judge *

Affirmative Team *

Negative Team *

Choose One: *

- Room 1 Room 2 Room 3 Room 4 Room 5 Room 6

OVERALL

Scoring Key: 1 = Ineffective; 10 = Most effective/persuasive

Rhetoric

Respectfully addresses judges, other team, those who may disagree or be less well-informed. Models civil dialogue.

Rhetoric: Affirmative *

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rhetoric: Negative *

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Case

Speakers works as a team, display teamwork and support of colleagues. Worked together to present a coherent and logically consistent argument.

Case: Positive *

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Case: Negative *

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

OPENING STATEMENTS

Scoring Key: 1 = Ineffective; 10 = Most effective/persuasive

Clear Thesis

Interpretation of the resolution is well-communicated. Approach to the resolutions makes sense.

Clear Case: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Clear Case: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Evidence

Offers support for points made, includes sources for external information. Arguments are well-developed, organizational structure is strong and logical. With respect, anticipates and addresses possible counter arguments.

Support: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Support: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Public Speaking Skills

Speaker orates at a reasonable pace, volume, tone and inflection. Their posture/body language is appropriate and professional.

Public Speaking: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Public Speaking: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CROSS EXAMINATION

Scoring Key: 1 = Ineffective; 10 = Most effective/persuasive

Q&A

Listens carefully and answers questions clearly. Does not stray from subject in question. Asks relevant questions of opposition. Answers questions concisely.

Q&A: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q&A: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Knowledge of Opposition's Case

Demonstrates understanding of other team's argument, refers to their claims.

Knowledge: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Knowledge: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Supports Case

Points align with case outlined in opening statement. Answers are supported by research.

Supports Case: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Supports Case: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Scoring Key: 1 = Ineffective; 10 = Most effective/persuasive

Clarification

Acknowledges information that may have gotten confused. Offers a compelling explanation for these confusions.

Clarification: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Clarification: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rebuttal

Anticipates and addresses opposition's arguments. Refutes these arguments convincingly. Speakers are respectful of opposition's case.

Rebuttal: Affirmative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rebuttal: Negative *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Note: At anytime you may calculate what each team's score is before submitting your scores.

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Affirmative Total: 0

Affirmative Percent: 0%

Negative Total: 0

Negative Percent: 0%

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