Explore new ways of thinking
DEBATE TOOLKIT

Civic Education Working Group
2017

Overview

Do you want to know what debating is? Are you looking for styles you can use in practice? Or simply want to know what is needed for organizing a debate? Check out the debate toolkit!

Content:

- **Brief explanation of debating (Slide 3)**
- **Introduction of British Parliamentary style (4-8), simplified British Parliamentary style (9-11) and Oxford Style (12-15)**
- **Quick look at**
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And then enjoy your debates!

Debate is a formal discussion where two opposing sides follow a set of pre-agreed rules to engage in a verbal exchange of different points of view on an issue. It is a discussion with a clear structure and the intention to convince with quality arguments.

Civic education & debating

Civic education is learning the competencies, i.e. skills, knowledge and attitudes, required to be an active, democratic and responsible citizen. Its ultimate goal is to educate the population on democratic citizenship and create awareness about their rights and responsibilities. So what does debating have to do with that? Well, if it increases critical thinking, argumentation, informed citizenship, mutual understanding, tolerance & cultural exchange, and if it empowers youth to let their voice be heard, it has the potential to actually shape active and responsible citizens! In short it can help you to know more and form a better-founded opinion.

The effects of debating

The incorporation of debate in education has been shown to improve academic attainment, develop critical thinking, better communication and argumentation skills: It also boosts aspirations, confidence and cultural awareness. Furthermore, debating challenges your thinking as you have to put yourself into the position of an opinion you maybe do not support yourself-this is strengthening critical thinking. Give it a try and you'll see that maybe some of your convictions are based on one-sided information, and that there might be some truth to other beliefs.

*Akerman, R., & Neale, I. (2011). Debating the evidence: an international review of current situation and perceptions. CfBT Education Trust.

Forms: British parliamentary style 1/5

Overview

Parliamentary debate is conducted under rules derived from British parliamentary procedure. It features the competition of individuals in a multi-person setting. The debate consists of four teams of two speakers, called factions, with two teams on either side of the case. Since this style is based on parliamentary debate, each faction is considered to be one of two parties in a coalition. The teams on the same side has to compete with each other, but only by achieving their defined role better, they cannot attack their side.

The teams can raise their hands during the statements and if the speaker calls them they can address questions(Point of information) to the speaker. It is suggested to call at least 1 question for every speaker.

This is particularly important in British Parliamentary style, as it allows the first two teams to maintain their relevance during the course of the debate, and the last two teams to introduce their arguments early in the debate.

Structure

Participants: Total 8. Government side (2 teams- 4 speakers; Opening Government Team+Closing Government Team), Opposition side (2 teams- 4 speakers; Opening Opposition Team+Closing Opposition Team); judge(s), time watcher

Preparation: The proposal of the topic should be clear beforehand (e.g. 1 week, 1 hour) to the speakers so they can prepare their arguments.The teams are drawn randomly and announced together with the topic.

Forms: British parliamentary style 2/5

1st Speaker of the Opening Government (Prime Minister) 5-7 minutes
- Introduces the proposal, explains the position of the government
- States what the split will be between the 1st and 2nd speaker,
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions

1st Speaker of the Opening Opposition (Leader of the Opposition) 5-7 minutes
- Explains the position of the Opposition
- Reflects to the first speaker of Government
- Explains the split between the 1st and 2nd speaker
- Provides arguments in favor of the Opposition's position

2nd Speaker of the Opening Government (Deputy Prime Minister) 5-7 minutes
- Reflects to the Deputy Prime Minister
- Extends the arguments of the Prime Minister
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions

2nd Speaker of the Opening Opposition (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) 5 minutes
- Reflects to the Opening Government
- Extends the arguments of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Provides arguments in favor of the Opposition's position

Forms: British parliamentary style 3/5

1st speaker of the Closing Government (Member of Government) 5-7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before
- Introduces a new angle of the debate, and try to refocus the debate on this angle (but he/she cannot directly defy the Opening Government)
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions, focusing on the new angle

1st speaker of the Closing Opposition (Member of Opposition) 5-7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before
- Introduces a new angle, counter-argument of the debate, and try to refocus the debate on this angle
- Provides arguments in favor of the Opposition's positions, focusing on the new angle

2nd speaker of the Closing Government (Government Whip) 5-7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions, but don't introduce a fundamentally new aspect
- Gives an overview of the debate to show the Government won the debate, and the new angle introduced by the Member of Government has played a central role

Forms: British parliamentary style 4/5

2nd speaker of the Closing Opposition (Opposition Whip) 5-7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before and answer to the questions the other teams posed
- Extends and elaborate the arguments already raised in the debate but not bring in fundamentally new arguments because the other team cannot reply
- Gives an overview of the debate to show the opposition won the debate, and the new angle introduced by the Member of Opposition has played a central role

Rules/Tips:
- *Point of information:* The other teams can ask questions to the speaker. The speaker can accept or refuse the question but is advised to take at least one because it is part of the evaluation

→ Taking Points of Informations makes the debate vivid but you do not need to take every one because then the flow of arguments is interrupted.
- Winning: Normally, there are 1-4 judges who judge every speaker according to certain criteria (see below), sum up the points for each team and the compare which is the winning team. Because not everyone feels comfortable to judge, another option without judging is to let the audience vote which team was best.

Forms: British parliamentary style 5/5

Rules/Tips (continued):

- Time watcher: The time watcher tells how much of speaking time is still left. The person rings the bell after one minute once to indicate that other teams can start asking questions now. Again once after the 6th minute to indicate that question time is over. After 7 minutes the person rings the bell twice to indicate that the speaking time is over. After 7 minutes and 30 seconds it has to stop the speaker. (if you have no bell, knock on the table or clap your hands).

Further information

- Listen to a debate: from the IDEA factory,
- Explanation video how BP works:

Forms: Simplified British parliamentary style 1/3

Overview

This simplified debate format was derived from the more complex British Parliamentary style, it is optimal for a 2 against 2 debate, but more people can be involved by sharing the speaker roles. There is no direct POIs, the questions have to be addressed during the speeches.

Structure

Participants: In total 4. Government side (1 team- 2 speakers; Opening Government Team), Opposition side (1 team- 2 speakers; Opening Opposition Team); judge(s)

Preparation: The proposal of the topic should be clear beforehand (e.g. 1 week, 1 hour) to the speakers, so they can prepare their arguments. The teams are drawn randomly and announced together with the topic.

Rules/Tips:

- *Point of information:* The other teams can ask questions to the speaker. It is advised to take at least one because it is part of the evaluation

→ Taking Points of Informations makes the debate vivid but you do not need to take every one because then the flow of arguments is interrupted.

- Winning: Normally, there are 1-4 judges who judge every speaker according to certain criteria (see below), sum up the points for each team and the compare which is the winning team. Because not everyone feels comfortable to judge, another option without judging is to let the audience vote which team was best.

Further information

- Listen to a debate here. It was done during the pre-round of the debating competition 2017 and conducted online.

Forms: Simplified British parliamentary style 2/3

1st Speaker of the Government (Opening Government-OG) - max. 7 minutes
- Introduces the proposal, explains the position of the government
- States what the split will be between the 1st and 2nd speaker,
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions
- Addresses 1 or 2 questions to the Opposition

1st Speaker of the Opposition (Opening Opposition-OO) - max. 7 minutes
- Explains the position of the Opposition
- Reflects to the first speaker of Government, answers the questions the OG posed
- Explains the split between the 1st and 2nd speaker
- Provides arguments in favor of the Opposition's position
- Addresses 1 or 2 questions to the Government

2nd speaker of the Government (Closing Government) - max. 7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before, answers to questions the Opening Opposition posed
- Provides arguments in favor of the Government's positions
- Gives a short overview of the debate to show the Government won the debate
- Addresses 1 or 2 questions to the Government

2nd speaker of the Opposition (Closing Opposition) - max. 7 minutes
- Reflects to the speakers before and anwers to questions the other teams posed
- Extends and elaborates the arguments already raised in the debate but does not bring in fundamentally new arguments because the other team cannot reply
- Gives an overview of the debate to show the opposition won the debate

Forms: Oxford style 1/4

There are plenty of forms and variations you can choose from, and of course you can create your own style. We outline briefly three styles here and the structure of them:

Overview
"Oxford-Style" debating is a competitive debate format featuring a sharply framed motion(topic) that is proposed by one side(pro) and opposed by another(con). Oxford Style debates follow a formal structure, defining the order of speakers, the time for the speech and what kind of questions can be asked by the audience. The winner is deduced by the votes of the audience: they vote before and after the debate on the motion. A winner is declared either by the majority of the audience or by which team has swayed more audience members.

Structure:
Participants: 3 Speakers Proposition, 3 Speakers Opposition, 1 Chairman (He is the moderator. The Chairman opens the debate officially, will lead through it and check the speaking time), audience
Preparation: The proposal of the topic should be clear beforehand (e.g. 1 week/ hour) to the speakers so they can prepare their arguments.

Forms: Oxford style 2/4

Presentation of the proposal: Opening of the debate. The audience expresses their opinion on it by voting either for, against or undecided

1st Speaker for the Proposition (7 minutes):
- Introduces the other speakers with name. It can be done formally if you want to (for this check out <u>here</u>)
- Defines the topic of the proposal
- Presents arguments in favor of the proposal

1st speaker for the Opposition (7 minutes):
- Introduces briefly the second speaker of the opposition
- Can accept the definition of the proposal or challenge it
- Presents arguments against the proposal

Debate from the floor(20-30 minutes):
- The audience can join the debate now and ask questions. Each speech has a limited amount of time (e.g. 3-5 mins)
- The audience addresses the questions to the Chairman who directs them to one of the speakers

Forms: Oxford style 3/4

2nd Speaker for the Proposition (7 minutes):
- Extend the arguments of first speaker
- Take up and responding to arguments from the Debate from the floor
- Focus on the positive consequences of the action in the proposal

2nd Speaker for the Opposition (7 minutes):
- Extend the arguments of first speaker
- Take up and responding to arguments from the Debate from the floor
- Focus on the positive consequences of the action in the proposal

Rebuttal 3rd speaker of the Proposition (7 minutes)
- Summing up the debate
- Telling why their side has won
- Does not bring new arguments

Rebuttal 3rd speaker of the Opposition (7 minutes)
- Summing up the debate
- Telling why their side has won
- Does not bring new arguments

Closing: The Chairman closes the debates and the audience votes again on the proposal

Rules/Tips:

Point of information: The audience can interrupt the speaker only using a Point of Information. A Point of Information means that the question addressed to the speaker is only about the content and does not contain personal opinion.The speaker can accept or refuse the question from the audience.

→ Taking Points of Informations makes the debate vivid but you do not need to take every one because then the flow of arguments is interrupted.

Point of order: A Point of order can be raised if there are violations to the rules e.g. rude comments. It always has to be accepted.

Time: Time for speaking should be respected and timeliness is part of the evaluation.

Winning: You can choose from two versions.

The side with the majority votes of the audience

Which side has swayed more audience members between the vote before the debate and the vote after the debate

→ because for winning the speaker needs to attract the audience, the speech should not only consist of logical arguments but also jokes or anecdotes

Further information:

Watch a debate by the Oxford Union here.

Check out an the Oxford Union website.

A quick look at...
The Choice of Topics

Try to mix business with pleasure: Combine the useful with the enjoyable. Think about what:
- Your members/participants should know more about. Could there be a need to challenge or confirm current views? Would you like to deepen your knowledge? Should your participants attain an attitude towards something?
- Your members/participants would like to talk about. Is it motivating, relevant, exciting enough for your participants?

You could collect possible options and then let your members vote on it.

Phrase your topic clearly and unambiguously. Your debate should not center on obscure claims of minutia. Try avoid (double) negations in the preposition. A good way to check your proposition is to try to make the negative/opposite form of it and to check if that is indeed the other side of the debate you want to see.

An example preposition: University education should be free
Opposite check: University education should not be free
Sounds like a fair debate topic to me!

A quick look at...
The Choice of Topics

For more ideas check out the IDEA website which includes a database of possible debate topics and lists the top 100 Debates from their website (ranked by total views) (http://idebate.org/view/top_100_debates). Each topic includes a prompt describing the topic, a list of points for and against, and a bibliography of resources.

An example preposition

University education should be free!

*University education should **not** be free!*

Opposite check

A quick look at…
The Preparation of participants

After choosing a relevant and exciting topic, it is time to prepare for the participants. Think about whether you want to assign sides to participants together with announcing the topic or only shortly before the debate start.

Participants need to have enough time to develop both a pro and con case so they can adapt their speech to the opposing team's claims as necessary. The arguments should be persuasively supported by evidence and reasoning. Effective persuasion requires credible, unbiased, quality supporting evidence, which may include a mix of facts, statistics, expert quotations, studies, polls; but it may also be real-life examples, anecdotes, analogies, and personal experience.

A quick look at…
The Preparation of participants

For this participants should consult a variety of articles and sources. It may help to search for previous debates on the topic in online debate databases such as http://idebate.org/debatabase and http://www.debate.org/debates/. But mind them that they should not overwhelm their speech with evidence; rather, they should select the best evidence to represent their claims. Because often the time for speeches is limited participants should center their cases on a few quality arguments. The better the preparation the more interesting the debate is.

It may help to search for previous debates on the topic in online debate databases such as
www.idebate.org/debatabase
and www.debate.org/debates

Concluding: allow some time for your participants to prepare properly.

A quick look at...
A good Argumentation - Content

How should the participants talk to convince the audience/the judge?
Here you find some tipps:

- Issue analysis: Define the topic at the beginning clearly. You should discuss the problem which is directly related to the proposal of the discussion. Present only fitting and relevant arguments.
- Be relevant: Do not talk about Palestinian conflict when the discussion is about International justice implemented after Yugoslavian wa
- Reflect to the other side and speakers: You have to respond every argument of the opposite side by:
    - Challenging the truthfulness of the argument or
    - Accepting the truthfulness of the argument on its own, but showing that it does not support the case your opposition is presenting (challenging its relevance) or
    - Accepting the argument as a relevant one, but showing that your arguments are more important than your opponents
- Argument elaboration: When making arguments ask yourselves these questions to explain and justify them:
    - What is the problem and the cause of this problem?
    - Why is your opinion relevant and your arguments valid?
    - What are benefits, gains, constraints or fallacies of such proposition?
- Use of information and examples: Use proven facts, numbers, statistics and examples and do not present false ones, but do not overwhelm people with numbers!

A quick look at…
A good Argumentation-Delivery

- Structure: Bring structure into your arguments so everyone can follow them!
- Attract the attention of the audience: e.g. by jokes, every day life examples..
- Comprehensibility: Talk so everyone can understand what you are saying, so not too fast and pronounce hard words clearly.
- Use of rhetorical figures and nonverbal communication: this makes the speech more lively and appealing
- Time-management: nobody can concentrate on a super long speech but use the time that is given!
- No use of logical fallacies: A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning. They are like tricks or illusions of thought, and they're often very sneakily used by politicians and the media to fool people. Don't be fooled! Coming to recognise and calling out these fallacies, strengthens your critical thinking instantly.

Why not print out a poster like the one find on the page yourlogicalfallacyis.com, and make sure your participants learn how to argument properly, like a good philosopher.

A quick look at...
Code of Conduct

- Respect different opinions. They can show you different point of view.
- Don't judge others by the opinions they have, or are portraying. The most evil points of view might be the most educative.
- Do not insult others.
- Discuss arguments, not personal affairs.
- Do not attack nationality, background, gender or language of anybody.
- Give proper reasons for your comments.
- Avoid obscurity and ambiguity.
- Do not discuss things which are NOT directly related to the topic of discussion.

A quick look at...
Chairing & Judging

The role of the Chair
The chair of the debate makes sure the debaters adhere to the rules of the debate. The chair takes care of the time limits. Furthermore, the chair decides on points of order made and intervenes in case the code of conduct is not observed. The chair should not interact in the content of the debate in any way after the first debater started their argumentation.

The role of the Judge
You can either have one or several judges or let the audience vote on which side has won. This is not possible for every form of debate, so please check beforehand.

If the audience should decide before and after the debate polls are done and the winner is the team who got the most votes after or swayed the most audience members.

If you want to have a jury or judge that evaluates teams on the quality of the arguments, they should focus on the quality of those arguments actually made, not on their own personal beliefs, and not on issues they think a particular side should have covered. If agreed on beforehand, other aspects can be taken into account as well. In some debate forms and cultures, humour is a very important factor.

A quick look at...
Chairing & Judging

If there are multiple judges, one method to decide on the results is:
1. The judges individually evaluate the teams using the criterias below
2. The judges give points from 0 to 3, accordingly of the ranking (0 point for the team on the 4th place, 1 point for the 3rd place...)
3. The judges come together and sum the points of the teams from step 2. The team with the most point is the winner.

As a recommendation for judging the debate you can follow the criteria listed in the next slide or ones in a modified form.

Criteria sheet for judging a debate

WWW.CIVICEDUCATION.EU

Content **(50 points)**	➢ Quality of issue analysis ➢ Quality of argument elaboration ➢ Correct use of information and examples ➢ Understanding of your role in the debate ➢ Following the debate, reflection to other speakers
Structure of arguments **(10 points)**	➢ Clearly understandable, coherent structure of the arguments
Delivery **(25 points)**	➢ Attracting the attention of the audience ➢ Comprehensibility ➢ Use of rhetorical figures and nonverbal communication ➢ No use of logical fallacies ➢ Time-management
Interaction between sides (15 points)	➢ Answering questions from the other side appropriately ➢ Directly responding to and countering arguments from the other side
Total **(100 points)**	

A quick look at...
The follow up of the debate

Now the debate is over we can actually see what it brought to your participants. Many persons will for themselves decide where they actually stand. This is not necessarily on one of the two sides, as the informal talks afterwards allow for people to express their nuanced opinion. Always try to have some space for aftertalks, either organised in your session, or simply over a coffee/drink.

If you debated on a topic that is (potentially) relevant for AEGEE, make sure to use this opportunity to discuss with your participants what AEGEE's position on the topic can be, or what AEGEE can and should do in the field you discussed.

Perhaps new ideas for projects or campaigns start in your debate, or old ideas are challenged. Everything is possible!

Overview organizing a debate

What?	Done?
Format • Decide in which style you want to do it • How many participants do you need and who wants to participate? • Who is the person leading through the debate, measuring time (chair)? • Who will judge the debate?	
Technical • Where does it take place? • When? • Open only to local members?	
Content • Collect proposals and decide on one • Tell it the participants a certain time before the debate so they can prepare	
Voting/Winning • Do you vote by hand signs or do you want to use different coloured paper? (when many people are in the audience) • Is there a price for the winners?	
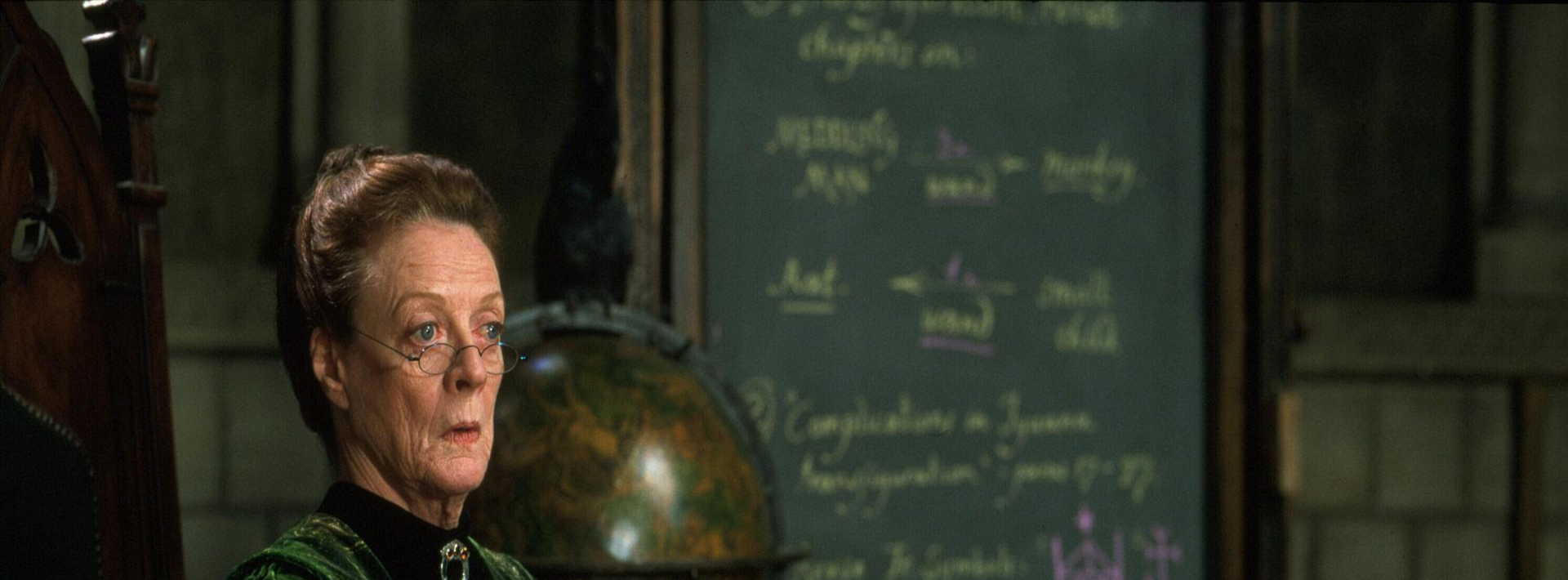
We wish you many fruitful debates!