



# The PhilSpeaks Debating Initiative Booklet: A Guide to Debating

## Contents



-Format- .....	1
-Glossary of Terms- .....	3
-Constructing a Case- .....	5
-Fallacy of Reasoning- .....	7
-Rebuttal and POI-.....	8
-Talking Sum-.....	9
-Clash of Ideas-.....	11
-Broad Concepts- .....	11
-International Relations- .....	12
-Useful Resources- .....	12
-Final Tips-.....	14
-Useful Resources- .....	14
-Final Tips-.....	14

## -Format-

Both the PhilSpeaks Competitive Weekend and the Pro-Am are in British Parliamentary, or Mace, competitions. Each debate consists of 4 teams of two, with two teams for the motion and two teams against.

Teams find out their position in the debate and the motion 15 minutes before the debate begins. Teams then have 15 minutes to prepare their case, and may not use the internet. Teams prepare separately – the first proposition and second proposition team do not prepare together and so forth. This includes teams from the same school.

Speeches are 5 minutes in length, with the first and last minute of time being protected. Students may not offer points of information during protected time but may do so to members of the opposition between the 2nd-4th minute. Students cannot offer points of information to people on their side of the motion.

The order of speeches goes:

First speaker on First Proposition, (also known as opening government)

First speaker on First Opposition

Second speaker on First Proposition

Second speaker on First Opposition

First speaker on Second Proposition, (also known as closing government)

First speaker on Second Opposition

Second speaker on Second Proposition

Second speaker on Second Opposition

The next page contains a more detailed description of what each team is expected to do

There will be four rounds of debating, with a break to quarter finals.

### **First Proposition**

- Why has this motion been set? Is it in the news? Spirit of the motion?
- What is the problem you want to solve?
- Model – clarify what you're doing to solve problem.
- Mechanism – how this model work/solves the problem.
- 1/2/3 points – the benefits of your solution.
- Generating points: where tried? Who affected? Stakeholders? Incentives? Capabilities? Consequences?
- Why is this point true? Why is this point important?
- All points in first speech (PM), second speech (DPM) deconstructs and reconstructs.

### **Second Proposition**

- First speech called "extension" – it must bring new points to the debate.
- Focus on new benefits, actors or identify a new problem to fix.
- Stress the importance of your extension within the debate.
- Any extraneous rebuttal at the start of your speech (as is always the case).
- Second speech called "sum speech" – it examines the points of clash in the debate (very rebuttal heavy).
- Emphasise partner's extension, rebut any responses to it.
- Prove that your side wins on the comparative – why life gets better for identified stakeholder despite what opp said.
- Don't directly credit first proposition.
- No new points in this speech.

### **First Opposition**

- First speech (LO) is very destructive – undermine the credibility of PM.
- All points in the LO speech, generate in similar way to first prop.
- Will be mentioning things they don't – unintended consequences.
- Usually accept existence of problem, but argue that prop make it worse than doing nothing.
- Must show that policy doesn't just fail, but is harmful. Wouldn't do it even with unlimited money to spend.
- Second speech (DLO) shows how partner's points beat first proposition.
- Then restrengthen those points so they stand strongly enough to beat second proposition.

### **Second Opposition**

- Almost identical to second proposition, but on the other side.
- First speech is extension, second speech is sum speech.
- It takes a long time for the debate to come to you, which gives you lots of prep time but means high expectations esp for quality of extension and analysis.
- Spend all your prep time writing the extension.
- Sum speaker shouldn't write their speech until it's almost their turn, as it helps to hear points before you respond to them.
- Must give compelling account of the debate, proving why each point falls on their side.

## -Glossary of Terms-

Below are definitions of terms that tend to crop up a lot, both in the workshops and in the public speaking and debating competition. Take a look at any you're unfamiliar with.

The Break: After a day of rounds in the Phil Speaks' competition in the top teams go through to the quarters. This is known as breaking.

Barracking: This is ill advised. When points of information are continually offered in quick succession despite being declined by the speaker this is barracking. It is often done with the intention of throwing the speaker off.

Comparative: comparison between the different situations offered by sides of the debate

Convenor: This is a person who organises and runs a competition as a whole.

Dummy/Swing team/ speaker: If there are not enough speakers or teams to fill a room then a dummy team or speaker will be used to even up the numbers. These speakers aren't technically in competition and cannot break.

The House: Members of the audience or those at the meeting are often referred to as a "house" as is done in parliament.

Iron-man: If someone has no partner and makes the two team speeches, they are said to be iron-manning.

Knife: When the 2nd team on one side of the debate (i.e. 2nd Prop) contradicts the 1st team (i.e. 1st Prop) they are said to be knifing. (barring exceptional circumstances, do not use. A knife will put you in last place)

Model: An outline of how to implement the proposal in the motion. This is effectively how the debate works in practice.

Motion: Proposal on which a debate is centred; those in proposition argue to uphold the motion, while those in opposition argue against it.

P.O.I: Point of information. Allowable only in unprotected time. You may interrupt the speaker and, if accepted, deliver a brief point.

Prep Time: The time you are given to prepare your speech after the topic or motion has been assigned. E.g. Impromptu = 3 mins. prep time.

Rebuttal: contradiction of your opponent's arguments.

Speaks: The points awarded to each individual speaker in each round, usually a 0-100 scale and used to rank teams on the same team points.

Squirrel: If the link between the wording of a motion and the debate is tenuous or in fact has little to do with it, this is known as a squirrel.

Standing orders: Delivered by the chair before the first speaker is introduced. Including information relating to length of speeches and whether points are accepted from the floor or other speakers, etc.

Tab: The league table which places teams and individuals in order after each round according to their results and speaker points.

TTHW...: That this house would...

TTHB...: That this house believes...

TTHS...: That this house supports...

## -Constructing a Case-

Prep time in debating competitions is only 15 minutes, so a structured system of what points to look for in a motion is invaluable. Luke Ryder, former Honorary Registrar of the University Philosophical Society, Irish Times Runner-up and Irish Mace Finalist describes an effective, systematic method of constructing a case based on examining 4 specific aspects of the motion:

1. Problem: Firstly, is there a problem? What is it?

E.g., examining the motion “TTHW boycott Israeli Academics” under this heading: the problem is the treatment of non-Jewish minorities within Israel, and Israeli policy in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Policy: Can we set up a policy decision that deals with this problem?

In relation to the above motion, not completely: short of invasion, there’s no quick fix. However, there are options available for pressuring Israel. That is why the boycott of academics is attractive- it targets the country’s elite in a highly effective manner.

3. Principles: What principles are at stake?

To continue looking at the same motion, the principle of refusing to engage with a regime which operates in an unacceptable manner. There’s an argument that engagement legitimises the regime’s actions.

4. Practice: How does this work?

Not a huge issue in this debate- but this one’s really more important in model-heavy debates.

Once you’ve asked these questions you have the genesis of a case. This is something which gets easier with practice; bear in mind that some teams you face will have done this before, so allow time to get better at it. Remember that to construct a case you need to be answering each of these questions as fully as possible.

## -Fallacy of Reasoning-

Having learnt how to construct your own arguments in a logical manner, it is next important to take a look at how to discover a mistake of logic in an opponent's argument. This is vital to debating, and, like forming a case, it gets easier with practise. Here Luke Ryder offers a specific example with a proposal, and accompanies it with analysis which shows the error of logic present in the original proposal.

Example: The Tory party in Britain want to introduce further favourable tax treatment for married couples. Based on research showing that married families are more stable than unmarried ones, they've decided to incentivise getting married. What's wrong with this idea? Let's assume that the facts are not in question; that married households are more stable.

Answer: They've made a mistake of logic. While there is a relationship between marriage and stability, the Tories have assumed that the act of marriage confers that stability, and that all you need to do is get more people married. This is probably wrong: people get married because they're already in stable relationships- therefore marriage is the result of a stable and happy relationship, not the cause of it.

What does this mean for Tory proposals? Well, it means that their argument is wrong. In addition, they're changing the motivation for getting married; they're actually trying to get people married for money. This is unlikely to create the stability they're looking for. In short: the policy won't do what they want it to do.

The reason the above is important is because almost every debate we do turns to some extent on questions of logic. Understanding how to examine proposals and how to determine their likely effects will stand you better than any number of Economist articles on the issue!

## -Rebuttal and POI-

Both rebuttal and points of information are the primary methods of engagement. I cannot stress the importance of engagement enough. Do not underestimate it. The content of your speech is obviously important but you cannot win a speech on good content in isolation and removed from the realities of the debate taking place around you. Effective, continuous and clever engagement is what separates you from others and what may push you above other teams in adjudication.

### 1. Rebuttal:

Rebuttal is pinpointing elements of the other side's arguments specifically and arguing directly against them explicitly in your speech. It requires on the spot thinking and an ability to respond quickly to new ideas but in reality is relatively easy. You will be in the mindset of your side of the debate, you will be thinking only about how you are right and how to prove this, therefore apply this to the other side. Everything they say, particularly their large substantive ideas, you must critique. You must decide why they are wrong, particularly in relation to the points that you are bringing to the debate. If they say the state has an obligation to protect all its citizens and you are arguing for the rights and freedom of the individual, rebuttal is a great way to not only prove your point but disprove theirs. Name them, tell everyone what's they've said and why it's wrong.

Front load it particularly **extraneous rebuttal**. This shows immediate engagement with the previous arguments to adjudicators and focuses your speech on the relevant details of the debate, ensuring you stay relevant to the debate and are not fighting your own battle or a losing battle. The aim of your initial rebuttal and the subsequent rebuttal interwoven at relevant places throughout the speech is to knock down and destroy the previous speech.

Attack their biggest arguments. Don't get bogged down in extraneous examples. Get to the point of the point even if it's difficult. Partly taking down the principle behind the core arguments of the previous speech is infinitely better than taking down full but unimportant or irrelevant examples. Don't get bogged down in semantics, that's not what rebuttal is there for.

Be glad if a point clashes directly with the opposition. Don't shy away from framing your entire point as a response to their argument. This is debate. Points of clash are what drive the debate and what the judges focus on when doing final adjudications. Be brave when dealing with these central issues. This will put you further up the table. Therefore

Always say you have rebuttal. Any time there's a clash, point it out very clearly. And say why there is a clash and why you win and on which points you win. You might want to state very strong rebuttal at the start but if it is directly related to one of your points make sure to elaborate on it there as well.

Enumerate points of rebuttal. This makes it clearer for the judges and sets you up as a clear and engaging speaker from the very beginning.

## 2. POIs:

Points of information are little flashes of brilliance that keep you relevant throughout the debate. They are particularly important when you are first or last on the table.

Write out POIs in prep and throughout debate and write them down in their entirety. Then you won't be stuck when it comes to making the point.

You should aim to be standing up and POI-ing every 30 seconds approximately. Especially after first clap. Points of information are about engagement and relevance but also about looking confident and in control. They are a form of tactic in the game of debating.

They should be short and snappy, no more than 10-15 secs.

Go for a "brick through the window" POI, one that takes them a long time to deal with but takes you a short time to present. Look for contradictions in their argument, places where they've made assumptions or false correlations, places where they've disregarded the model or their partner's speech. Look for holes but don't nit-pick. In the same way that you don't dwell on irrelevant and annoying examples, facts and figures, frame your POIs around ideas and arguments, holes in their analysis and logic rather than in their reading of the Economist.

Bring up something from your speech that they haven't dealt with. This reminds the judges of your brilliant points and also makes them deal with your speech in their time. However, do not give away large aspects of your substantive in a POI before you've had a chance to claim it. This is particularly true of extension speakers. It is difficult enough to bring new things to the debate after four five minute speeches so don't put yourself at a disadvantage.

An aside: role fulfilment in terms of rebuttal, the other person that's **not** about to speak should be doing the rebuttal and POI-ing. Before the speech, hand it over. Once the first speaker has spoken, they then take over for POIs and Rebuttal. Once both the speakers are finished, they focus entirely on POIs.

## -Talking Sum-

- Final speaker on each side.
- Role fulfilment key.
- No new material.
- Identify points of clash: the key ideological or practical areas of disagreement that the debate centres around. Usually 2 or 3.
- Show why these arguments fall on your side.
- Must respond to the debate that has taken place.
- Unwise to write out a full speech during prep time, risk of irrelevance in the face of the actual debate. Focus on teammate's speech but still think about what the key ideas are likely to be and jot down some important ideas. You will probably have at least 30 minutes during the debate to think of what you are going to say. Often a good idea to take brief notes on what the other side's speakers have said. Then pick out the key recurring disputes.
- You can do extraneous rebuttal first. Then deal with the big ideas.
- Good to use your partner's ideas to defeat the ideas of the other side but don't worry if there isn't a complete, direct clash here.
- Also a chance to define the comparative in your own terms. Eg. In gender quotas example, prop will try to define the comparative in terms of discrimination (opp) versus no discrimination (prop) but opp must clarify that they aren't happy with a situation that is discriminatory but that are advocating a different means of achieving equality.
- Compare the different worlds under each side and why yours is best.

## -Clash of Ideas-

Here are a few big ideas that form the crux of many debates:

<b><u>Individual Rights</u></b>	Vs.	<b><u>Collective Rights</u></b>
The individual is the basis of society and must be protected from the tyranny of the majority.		The community is the basis for the individual; society has to protect the majority; the collective comes first.
<b><u>Freedom</u></b>	Vs.	<b><u>Justice</u></b>
People are born free and no one has the right to interfere with them more than is absolutely necessary.		People can only be free if they agree to abide by certain rules. Otherwise some people will dominate others naturally.
<b><u>Pragmatism</u></b>	Vs.	<b><u>Absolutism</u></b>
The end justifies the means, i.e. goal based arguments.		The means characterise the ends, i.e. duty based arguments.

The following sections are more suited to people who have debated before – they can be too complex for beginners and knowledge of them isn't necessary for PhilSpeaks

## -Broad Concepts-

A general knowledge of broad concepts can be useful to colour your speeches. In a debate it shows that you have a broader understanding of the issue and so lends weight to your arguments, whereas in impromptu it provides a vocabulary through which to express your own ideas.

- **Absolutism:** you should always follow the rules.
- **Authoritarianism:** Humans need society to impose a social contract to prevent them fighting.
- **Empiricism:** All we know is what we find in fact, and this often changes.
- **Existentialism:** Existence determined by the individual experiencing it.
- **Utilitarianism:** The greatest happiness for the greatest number.
- **Liberalism:** The individual can govern himself and succeed for himself.
- **Conservatism:** Slow change is better than radical change, as it protects the social fabric which keeps society together.
- **Pragmatism:** You should do what is necessary for important goals.
- **Capitalism:** Individual self-interest is best for innovation & prosperity.
- **Communism:** Sharing resources is the fairest and most efficient way to run society. Force may be necessary to achieve this.
- **Interventionism:** States must act to prevent human rights abuses, even in foreign countries. There are criteria for a "just war".
- **Self-determination:** Ethnic & geographic groups should be free from foreign domination and govern themselves.
- **Pacifism:** use of force is considered generally unacceptable.

## -International Relations-

International relations are a staple of the debating circuit. Although a good general knowledge is invaluable, being aware of some key issues really pays dividends. Here Derek Lande, Chief Adjudicator of the World Debating Championships, gives a summary of the broad issues.

Is Terrorism Justified? In every debate where terrorism is being considered three factors must be considered.

The first 2 are derived from just law theory:

1) *Jus ad Bellum*: The aims must be just. One can argue whether the aims of terrorism are justified.

2) *Jus in Bello*: The methods must be just. Are methods proportional, and does the act in some way further the cause?

3) *There is no other avenue for change.*

Statehood and Self-Determination: For practical reasons we cannot grant statehood to the countless groups of people around the world who could potentially form a state. The international community  
The PhilSpeaks Debating Initiative 2016/2017  
A.O'S.

has broad guidelines for the circumstances to exist for statehood to be needed which have been expanded upon from the Montevideo Accords:

1) Economically viable?

Would it be too small/poor to pay for its own administration?

2) Demographically viable?

Would it contain a significant enough population to ensure its continued survival?

3) Socially viable?

Would creating this state open up the possibility that divisions within that society may lead to social strife/civil war while it is a weak/fledgling society.

4) Geographically viable?

It must be feasible to create a congruent state with defined borders.

5) Politically viable?

Is it realistic to attempt to create this state given the political and other effects it would have on other existing countries?

Peace-keeping Vs. Humanitarian Intervention:

The US and other Western states were quite active in providing peace-keeping/making troops until two watershed events started to change this willingness:

Somalia 1991- American troops intervened in this conflict leading a UN Mission attempting to stabilise the country and avert a famine. End result the UN withdrew following heavy casualties. Several US soldiers were killed and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu causing a collapse in public appetite for using troops abroad.

Srebrenica 1995- Dutch troops stand aside as Serb troops massacre thousands in the city which was set up as a UN safe haven. Inquiries later place significant blame on the Dutch causing the collapse of the Dutch Government.

This Western reluctance is blamed for the fact that the international community largely stood aside and allowed the Rwandan genocide to happen in 1994, and further atrocities by the Serbs to take place.

## -Useful Resources-

<http://www.esu.org/our-work/esuresources> - particularly useful for teachers

<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/series/greatspeeches>

[http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1841228\\_1841749\\_1841736,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1841228_1841749_1841736,00.html)

<http://idebate.org/>

<http://www.nobeliefs.com/fallacies.htm>

<http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/PublicSpeaking.htm>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/WUDCBerlin2>

<http://debatewise.org/>

## -Final Tips-

Be natural in your delivery. Debating at its best is just talking. And that means speaking the way you would to anyone. Add in a bit of natural humour as you would normally.

Relax – There is nothing more annoying than someone telling you this when you're nervous but it's true. Even if you're not happy with your speech, it's not a big deal, chances are no one will remember. Take a breath and start when you're ready. It's your time and there is nothing more unique about debating than the opportunity to own the room for a few minutes. It's your time so take it when you're ready.

Finally, have fun. Debating is supposed to be enjoyable, not stressful. Do your best to chat to people from different schools and enjoy the weekend!