

Debating Society Rules for Online Debates

Conduct for Audience Members:

1. Every school rule applies during Debating Society meetings.
2. We promote independent thought, critical thinking and the freedom to express ourselves.
3. It should be noted that a speaker's arguments may not reflect their own beliefs or opinions.
4. It is not acceptable to criticise a speaker, only their arguments.
5. We ask that everyone remains muted while not speaking, this is to prevent problems with the platform we are using.
6. It is not permitted to use the meeting chat unless expressly given permission by the chair. (see the question section below)
7. Please approach these debates with the same respect and thoughtfulness as our speakers.

Conduct for Speakers:

1. Follow every one of the rules below.
2. 'ad hominem' arguments will not be tolerated.
3. Respect the chair at all times.
4. We ask that speakers remain muted, whilst not speaking.

Voting:

1. A preliminary vote will be taken at the beginning of the debate.
2. A final vote will be taken at the end of the debate.
3. **It is essential** that you vote in both, not one or the other.
4. At each opportunity you will have the chance to vote for the proposition or the opposition or to abstain from the motion.
5. To take the vote, the chair will invite audience members to "raise their hand", using the Microsoft Teams feature on the main control panel. This feature is accessible on mobile and desktop.
6. The chair will first ask audience members to raise their hand for the proposition, then the opposition and then for any abstentions.
7. You must raise your hand when the chair invites the audience to vote for the side which you support.
8. You must "keep your hand raised" until the chair instructs audience members to lower their hands, so the process may move on.
9. The debate is won by the side which gains the largest number of votes between the preliminary and final votes.

The Debate:

1. There are two speakers on either side of the house.
 - a. The first speaker on each side will present two, three minute speeches.
 - b. The second speaker on each side will present one, six minute speeches.
2. The order for the debate is as follows:
 - a. Proposition opening (three minutes)
 - b. Opposition opening (three minutes)
 - c. Proposition rebuttal (six minutes)
 - d. Opposition rebuttal (six minutes)
 - e. Questions from the audience (rules are below)
 - f. Opposition closing (three minutes)

g. Proposition closing (three minutes)

Points of Information:

1. POIs may be raised by a speaker **outside of protected time**.
 - a. Protected time is the first and last thirty seconds of any three minute speech.
 - b. Protected time is the first and last minute of any six minute speech.
 - c. The chair will enforce protected time.

2. In order to raise a POI, a speaker may unmute themselves and say, “point of information”.
 - a. The current speaker may accept or refuse the point of information.
 - b. If a POI is accepted, the point will be made and then the speaker who raised the point must mute themselves.
 - c. If a POI is not accepted the speaker raising the POI must mute themselves.

3. The following other rules apply around POIs:
 - a. There will be **no back and forth**.
 - b. The same or similar POI may not be raised afterwards.
 - c. Hassling will not be tolerated, as enforced by the chair.
 - d. Extra time will not be awarded for accepting POIs.

Questions (for audience members):

1. After both rebuttal speeches, audience members will have the opportunity to ask a question.
2. To indicate you have a question, use the “raise your hand feature” on Microsoft Teams.
3. The chair will individually ask those with their hands up to send a message in the meeting chat.
4. When called upon, you may send your question in the chat.
 - a. The question must state to whom it is addressed.
5. As expressed earlier, you may use the chat for nothing, other than posting a question when called upon.

Questions (for speakers):

1. The speaker or side to whom / which the question was directed may answer.
2. The other side of the house will have an opportunity to the answer.
3. The floor will move back to the first side, who will have a chance to address any last points regarding the question.
4. The responses to these questions should be short and the chair will enforce a reasonable time limit.