

Organizing a debate training and preparing participants for a debate

When organizing a debate you must make sure that the potential debaters are familiar with the debate format you are going to use and debate culture in general. If not, then some time before the debate itself, debate training session(s) must be organized. A good debate training should be conducted by experienced debate trainers or debaters, who must be familiar with the debate format being taught. Preferably they should have used it in debates themselves or at least become familiar with it in advance.

A typical debate training session usually lasts up to 4 hours (with breaks). However, in order to prepare inexperienced debaters you might need to organize several debate training sessions. These might or should include:

Ice-breaker games:

That would encourage participants to talk and be actively involved in the training. An example of these games would be a simple get-to-know game with every participant introducing themselves (e.g. name, nationality, age, debating experience, school, occupation)

Introduction to debates in general:

What is a debate? Why is debating important? What are the advantages of debating?

Explaining debate topics and questions:

How to come up with a good debate topic? How to formulate a proper debate question? Here you can play a little game with participants, asking them what they would imagine to be a good debate question.

Explaining debate rules and structure:

What is the debate format you are using? What is its structure? What are the rules?

Various games and exercises:

These help to make learning the debate format easier. How to formulate a proposal? How to build a strong argument? Mini debates (up to 5 min) and so on.

Debate assessment:

After you are finished explaining the rules and structure, you might want to talk about judging and evaluating the debate. What is a good debate? How does one assess it? What are the criteria?

Mock debates:

At the end of the training session you might organize a short mock debate on a simple debate question, which would not require intensive preparation. However, a separate only mockdebates session is recommended for the participants to get used to the format and try the roles of both a debater and judge. A separate debate session might last up to 2 hours and can also be organized online.

Using various technological and education tools:

Things like Kahoot or Mentimeter, might make the training session more interactive and engaging. It is especially recommended to use such tools when organizing an online debate training session.

Breaks:

Are essential when conducting a 4-hour or longer training session. It is recommended that the session include at least two short coffee-breaks of about 10-20 minutes long, and preferably a lunch break of 45 minutes.

