

# DEBATE NOT ARGUE

## Judging and evaluating a debate

### The main components of a good debate:

- It is based on a controversial and relevant topic;
- It has a well-formulated debate question (statement) with a great deal of pros and cons;
- It features a well drafted proposal by the participating debaters;
- There is strong interaction and involvement of all participating debaters;
- The debaters possess a good knowledge of the topic and provide valid and well-founded arguments;
- The debaters are fluent, eloquent and are able to lead the discussion.

**These characteristics can be applied to virtually every debate format there is.** However how a debate is evaluated and judged is very different depending on which debate format is being used. **Here are some guidelines to a debate assessment of a four-people (2 on pro and 2 on con side) basic debate format.**

### Debate Assessment (2 pro/2 contra basic debate format)

#### The Jury:

The jury decides how good the debate was and how well the participants debated. It usually consists of five judges (could also be less) including a timekeeper. The judges should ideally have some experience in debating and must be familiar with the debate format being used. They evaluate the contribution of each individual to the success of the debate as a whole. To ensure impartiality judges should not know debaters personally and preferably should come from different surroundings (country, city, university, school etc.). During the debate the jury sits before the debaters and takes notes. It does not interfere in the debate.

#### Jury tasks:

- Listen carefully to the debate
- Evaluate the performance of each participant, preferably according to the criteria.
- Publicly evaluate the performance of a participant. The evaluation should be brief and precise, e.g. two good things and one bad.

#### The timekeeper:

They should keep the time according to the rules and take a note of each participant's speaking time. The timekeeper usually uses a bell or holds up signs to notify the participants about their remaining time, when they need to wrap up, and when the speaking time is up.



## Assesment criteria:

1. Subject matter knowledge;
2. Wealth of expression;
3. Ability to lead a discussion;
4. Persuasiveness.

If debaters debate in teams then the criterion of (5.) Dialogue is also taken into consideration.

Note: the level of knowledge of the language being used is not taken into consideration in the evaluation.

The judges are asked to assess the extent to which each speaker meets these four criteria and the extent to which each individual has contributed to the success of the debate. As a result, each debater learns what strengths he or she has shown and what he or she can improve.

If there is a tie between the scores in a decisive debate then usually a debater which has scored better in the Ability to lead a discussion wins. If the scores in the mentioned criterion are even, then the fate is decided by the commission of the jury/ies.

Below we will show how to allocate the points in each of the criteria.

### 1. Subject Matter Knowledge

*How well does the speaker know the issue?*

Subject matter knowledge describes the ability to accurately answer factual questions.

- Knowledge of the current situation (facts, problems, previous regulation)
- Knowledge of evaluation perspectives (moral, political, legal)
  - Correctness and relevance of information
- Accuracy of information (data, facts, definitions, quotations)

#### 5 Points

Excellently prepared, has everything ready, detailed knowledge and understanding of the issue

#### 4 Points

Precisely informed, knows all important aspects

#### 3 Points

Well informed, knows the most important facts

#### 2 Points

Rather informed, some parts correct

#### 1 Point

Barely knows the subject, many things wrong

#### 0 Points

Does not know anything, only false statements



## 2. Wealth of expression

*How well does the speaker express what they mean?*

Wealth of expression illustrates the ability to express oneself linguistically and verbally - in all dimensions of linguistic expression: verbal, vocal and nonverbal.

- Fluent presentation (opening and closing rounds)
  - Clear structure & appropriate pauses
- Comprehensible sentence structure, proper choice of words, appropriate phrases
  - Clarity and catchiness of the formulation
  - Vivid gestures, facial and vocal expression
  - Clear pronunciation

### 5 Points

Always appropriate, catchy and original

### 4 Points

Clear, illustrative and vivid

### 3 Points

Understandable and fluent

### 2 Points

Somewhat understandable

### 1 Point

Barely understandable

### 0 Points

Totally incomprehensible

## 3. Ability to lead a discussion

*How well does the speaker respond to the others?*

Ability to lead a discussion describes the competence of the speakers to engage in the conversation.

- Listening and letting others conclude (no inappropriate interruptions)
  - Respond to the previous speakers (explicit, precise, correct)
  - Willingness to give way when better arguments are made
  - Taking into account the results

### 5 Points

listens very carefully, asks questions, shows an overview, responds to the thoughts of others

### 4 Points

listens well, interacts well with the others

### 3 Points

sometimes listens well, usually considers the others

### 2 Points

listens most of the time, sometimes responds to others

### 1 Point

does not listen much, barely talks to the conversation partners

### 0 Points

does not listen at all, does not participate in the conversation

#### 4. Persuasiveness

*How well does the speaker justify what they say?*

Persuasiveness is the ability to argue in such a way that the listener is willing to consider the speaker's position as reasonable and agree with it.

- Justification (not merely a statement) of the own position
  - Justification logically consistent (conclusiveness)
  - Justification on common grounds (plausibility)
- Importance and weighing of the arguments presented
- Attention paid to the essential factors in the course of the debate

##### 5 Points

justified persuasively in every respect, attention paid to the essential factors in the course of the debate

##### 4 Points

everything well justified, reasons well weighted

##### 3 Points

partly weak, partly good reasons

##### 2 Points

Position partially justified, many reasons rather weak

##### 1 Point

almost only statements, position hardly justified

##### 0 Points

Position completely unclear, no justification

#### 5. Dialogue

*How well do the team members work together?*

(only used when a debate happens between two teams)

- How does the speaker compose themselves towards the other team and their own team members?
  - How well do the team members cooperate?
- Does each team member get about the same amount of speaking time?
  - Is the speaker empathic and respectful?

##### 5 Points

Works as a cohesive team member, takes up enough speaking time but not too much, and is very respectful and empathetic towards everyone involved

##### 4 Points

Works well with others but might be a bit under or overbearing at times

##### 3 Points

Tries to work with others but does not always know their place and tone in the conversation very well

##### 2 Points

The speaker often talks out of line or barely talks at all

##### 1 Point

Creates conflict and does not seem very willing to cooperate in their team or with the opposition

##### 0 Points

The debater is abrasive and does not respect the other candidates or their speaking time