

English-Speaking Union Schools Mace

Guidelines for coaches

Selecting a team

The ESU likes to view both of its competitions as extending beyond the actual rounds themselves and being an integral part of the internal calendar for participating schools.

Why not involve more students by having an in-school selection process which is open to all students? This could take the form of a competition (perhaps within the debating society or between forms or English classes) where each class selects their own team which goes on to participate in your own preliminary round in school. You can then pick the best participants to go on to represent your school in the first round of the main ESU competition. You may very well be surprised by the results ...

A squad rather than a team

It's immensely beneficial if you can train for debates as a squad of four, rather than a team of just two. This has the following benefits:

- The team can get more practice.
- You have two reserves who can step in if one of the others has to pull out at the last minute.
- By selecting younger students for the third and fourth squad members you can build up an invaluable store of experience to deploy in next year's competition.

The two squad members who are not competing in the Mace don't need to feel as if they are second strings; they can be entered for some of the other competitions listed at www.britishdebate.com/schools/othercompetitions.

Training a team

Students should be strongly encouraged to take as much responsibility for the preparation of their case as possible; the more they research independently, the more familiar they will be with the material which they will have to manipulate during the debate.

However, you can help your team immensely by doing some or all of the following:

- Joining in the brainstorming and planning sessions and contributing your ideas once the squad members have put forward theirs.
- Giving your squad the chance to practise the motion in front of an audience at a debating society meeting or in front of a class.
- Encouraging as many supporters as possible to accompany you to the round itself (this is one of the big advantages of hosting).

At the competition

You have a big role before any debate in calming down last minute nerves; remind the team that everyone is nervous and that a bit of adrenalin is helpful!

Enjoy the debate, but remember that you may not speak in the floor debate for any debate in which one of your teams is participating. And please don't be tempted to 'sabotage' a strong rival team during their debate by making particularly fierce comments during other floor debates.

An inevitable fact of the competition is that someone is knocked out; if this happens, please encourage your team to see this in a positive light as a learning experience.

Debate and the media - reporting opportunities for audience members

Debating skills are central to our democracy, but without good media coverage to report on what goes on in parliament, the entire political process breaks down. For this reason, we want to encourage young audience members attending rounds of the ESU Schools Mace to write reports on the debates in the style of a Parliamentary sketch writer.

Audience members could write a report of up to 600 words on each round that they attend. The report should aim to be objective and unbiased while remaining interesting to read and conveying a sense of the round's atmosphere as well as its arguments.

Good newspaper reporters need to meet deadlines; reports should be filed to centre@esu.org no later than one week following the debates on which the report

is based. The report should state where and when the debates took place, as well as the name, age and school of the student and contact details for the teacher who attended the round with them.

We will aim to publish as many reports as possible online at www.britishdebate.com/schools/mace and outstanding reports could win a prize of a digital camera and a trip with an MP to write a sketch from the Gallery at the House of Commons.

Particular credit will be given to students who send us proof that all or part of their report was published in a school or local newspaper.

- ▶ Read other people's reports online at www.britishdebate.com/schools/mace