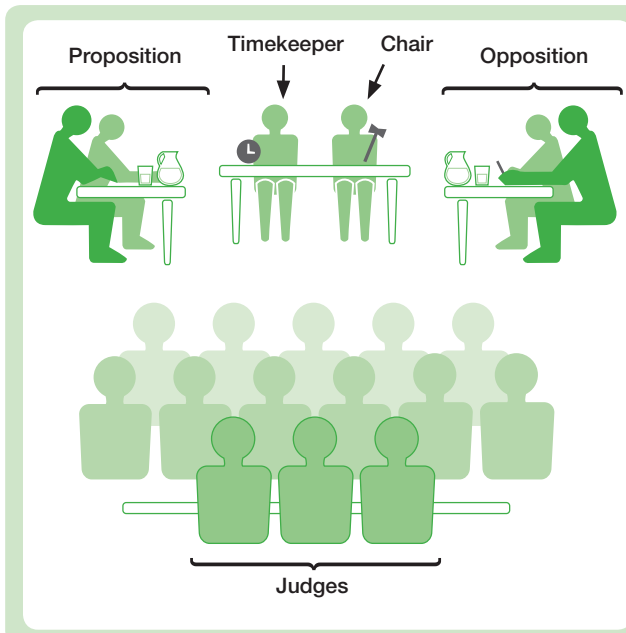


English-Speaking Union Schools Mace

How a debate works



Setting up the room

- Three tables should be set up at the head of the room: the central table is for the Chair and the Timekeeper, the tables for proposition and opposition should be placed either side of it.
- The first speaker for each side should sit closest to the centre.
- The judge's table should be placed at the rear of the room, or halfway down if the room is large.

The Chair and the Timekeeper

- A Chair and a Timekeeper are needed for each debate. They are normally students from the host school. Hosts may want to use pupils who will go on to form their debate team the following year.

How each heat runs

Each heat in the competition consists of two or three debates, with each debate involving teams from two schools. Each team only debates once during the evening; during the other debates they form part of the audience.

Each debate runs in the following order:

- **At least two weeks before the heat:** Your host will inform you of the motion you will be debating, and which side your team is on. The only exception to this is when a round is held as 'short-preparation'.
- **On the day** each debate runs as shown in the table opposite, with the following order of speeches:

**1st proposition 1st opposition ► 2nd proposition ► 2nd opposition ►
Floor debate ► Opposition summary ► Proposition summary**

After all three debates, the judges retire and consider their verdict. Their decision is independent of the audience votes which may be held on each motion at this time.

Announcement of the winners and getting feedback from the judges

When the judges return they will give some general feedback before announcing who will be going on to the next round. Typically two teams go through from first round heats. They may come from any two debates, or the same debate. One team normally goes through from subsequent rounds. The Area Organiser will confirm the number with the host beforehand. A runner-up will also be selected, in case a winning team is unable to take part in the next round. The runner-up is announced on the evening, except where a heat involving four teams would mean it is obvious which team came last, in which case the runner-up is informed discreetly afterwards.

Following the result some of the judges will make themselves available to teams and speakers to give individual feedback. This is a great opportunity for teams to get some specific suggestions on what they have done well and how they can improve. Please don't use it to attack the judges' decision – we know you may not always agree with their decision, but listening politely to them will help you understand it.

Arriving early

The order of the debates will normally be announced in advance, but the host school may change this order without notice at their discretion.

This will usually be the case if one or more schools arrives late to the round. Please try to arrive as early as possible to avoid this happening.

How a debate works

| Minutes elapsed (approx.) | 2nd proposition | 1st proposition | Chair | 1st opposition | 2nd opposition |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| 00:00 | | | Introduces debate and 1st prop. speaker. | | |
| 02:00 | | Defines motion, previews proposition arguments, delivers arguments and summarises.* 7 minutes. | | | |
| 09:00 | | | Introduces 1st opp. | | |
| 09:30 | | | | Previews opposition arguments, deals with (or rebuts) some of the 1st prop's arguments, delivers own arguments and summarises.* 7 minutes. | |
| 16:30 | | | Introduces 2nd prop. | | |
| 17:00 | Recaps, previews, rebuts, delivers own arguments and summarises.* 7 minutes. | | | | |
| 24:00 | | | Introduces 2nd opp. | | |
| 24:30 | | | | | Recaps, previews, rebuts, delivers own arguments and summarises.* 7 minutes. |
| 31:30 | | | Invites speeches from the floor. 5 to 10 minutes. | <i>Floor questions are not answered straight away by the teams, but can be referred to by summary speakers in their summary speeches.</i> | |
| 36:30 | | | Introduces opposition summary speaker. | | |
| 37:00 | | | | Either 1st or 2nd opposition Summarises by referring to own case, opponents' case and the floor debate. 4 minutes. | |
| 41:00 | | | Introduces proposition summary speaker. | | |
| 41:30 | Either 1st or 2nd proposition Summarises by referring to own case, opponents' case and the floor debate. 4 minutes. | | | | |
| 45:30 | | | Thanks speakers and concludes the debate. | <i>An audience vote is taken by each Chair after the judges retire at the end of the evening.</i> | |

* During the main speeches, opposing speakers should offer 'Points of Information'. It is important that each speaker accepts some Points of Information during their main speech.

How a debate works

Defining the motion

The definition is delivered **at the start of the first proposition speech** and is very important, although it must also be kept succinct (20-30 seconds for a simple motion and never more than a minute).

Without a solid and sensible definition, the debate may end up going nowhere, or, even worse, all over the place. Setting the definition is about far more than merely getting out a dictionary. There are several key questions that must be asked:

- **Who?** If the motion proposes a specific policy or course of action (“This House would abolish the United Nations” or “This House would bring back the death penalty”), you may need to clarify ‘who’ is implementing it. This is often implicit in the motion. The UN motion implies that “This House” includes all members of the UN. Bringing back the death penalty implies a UK focus; other countries have the death penalty already and criminal justice is generally a domestic matter. A motion like “This House would censor the Internet” leaves it more open; the UK? the EU? a worldwide organisation? However, simpler (e.g. UK) is often better.
- **What?** What’s the policy about? Would the death penalty be by lethal injection or hanging? Would it be just for murder, or other crimes, too? Exactly what would be censored on the net (e.g. porn, racist content)? Does the internet include email?
- **How?** How is the policy going to be implemented? Without a mechanism or a plan, your definition may lack the clarity necessary to set up a clear, and clean debate. For instance, would you simply abolish the UN and let the world get on without it, or would you propose a replacement? Would you do it immediately, or would you allow a modest amount of time for preparations to be made? You don’t have to offer a mechanism, but if you do make sure it doesn’t become so elaborate that it skews the debate away from the main topic; a proposition case for abolishing the UN must focus on the UN’s bad points, not your fancy new plan.
- **Limitations?** Is this policy going to affect everyone, or only some people? Are there any limitations on the policy? For instance, a common limitation on the death penalty excludes the insane.

Note that the definition is a way into making the debate clear, accessible and fair for both sides. It is **NOT** a way of making life easier for the proposition by unfairly excluding difficult things they don’t want to talk about or tricking the opposition by proposing a topic they couldn’t have been expected to prepare for. The definition should mean the debate ends up as close as possible to what an ‘ordinary-intelligent-well-informed-person-in-the-street’ would expect to hear debated; smart and straightforward.

Here is an example:

“This House would abolish the UN”

“The United Nations should immediately be completely disbanded, including all subsidiary institutions such as the Security Council, UNESCO and the WHO. No replacement organisation will be established, for the reasons my partner will describe in his speech.”

- **Analysis debates** Sometimes a motion is set which doesn’t propose a specific policy, but gives a statement which needs to be analysed. An example would be “This House believes that the UN *is a failure*”. No action is proposed, but the first proposition needs to set some measure by which the alleged failure can be judged:

“This House believes the UN is a failure”

“The UN has failed because it has not met its own stated aims of maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations or making enough progress in alleviating international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.”

In an analysis debate you wouldn’t have to prove, for example, that the UN is a failure in every single case, only that the principle is true in general (for the significant majority of cases). For the opposition to win, they need to show one or more areas where the UN has had a major success.

Challenging a definition Opposition teams need to be prepared for a slightly unusual or unexpected definition, as proposition teams can still be clever while remaining fair.

Definitions may only be challenged if they are totally unreasonable. Examples of ‘unreasonable’ definitions include truisms or narrowing beyond what our ‘ordinary-intelligent-well-informed-person-in-the-street’ would expect (e.g. defining the UN as just the Security Council).

Challenges can only be made by the first opposition speaker, who states their reasons for the challenge and introduces their alternative interpretation. This must be accepted by the second proposition unless they can prove their original definition was valid. This type of ‘definitional debate’ is generally poor and should be avoided by a reasonable proposition definition which is accepted by the opposition.

- ▶ Find out more about defining motions at www.britishdebate.com/schools/mace

How a debate works

Rebuttal

Points of Information (overleaf) give you the opportunity to argue against the other side while they are delivering their arguments.

But it is also important to address the other side's arguments during your own speech. This is called 'rebuttal'. The aim of rebuttal is to undermine the opposition's case, thus leaving your case looking even stronger by comparison.

All speakers (except the first proposition, who hasn't had a speech to respond to) are expected to rebut the other side, even if some of their arguments surprise you or seem very convincing.

As the debate moves on, the amount of rebuttal done by each speaker should increase, as they have heard more arguments to respond to. In a typical debate 1st opposition may rebut for 1-2 minutes, 2nd proposition for 2+ minutes and 2nd opposition for 2-3 minutes.

Rebuttal can come at the start of your speech, or be 'interwoven' into your main arguments; just make sure it's clear to the audience (and judges!) that you are addressing the other side's arguments, so they can see you are rebutting. You might do this by starting each bit of rebuttal by briefly quoting what the other side said, or by naming one of your opponents and the argument of theirs that you will rebut.

For example, imagine Belle made a speech on why we should abolish the UN:

Belle (1st proposition)

- Peace - the UN has failed to stop wars
- Countries ignore the UN
- The UN favours the West, fuelling terrorism

Lily might already have planned to make the following points during her opposition speech:

Lily (1st opposition)

- Success of UN peacekeepers
- UN aid programmes help reduce terror
- UN is a good forum for non-violent debate

Here's a possible way Lily could restructure her speech to rebut Belle's points effectively:

- use 30 seconds at the start of her speech to rebut the point about people ignoring the UN.
- Lily's main points about UN peacekeepers and non-violent debate can both be used to rebut Belle's 'Peace' point, so she could move these to be her first two points and flag up to the audience that they are also rebuttal on 'Peace'.
- Make her third point about aid reducing terror, pointing out again that it rebuts the other side.

“ Debaters have to show they can respond to the arguments of the other side in the debate. They do this in three main ways:

- through Rebuttal (left)
- in Summary speeches (below)
- in Points of Information (overleaf) ”

Summary speeches

The summary speeches are delivered after the floor debate by either the first or second speaker from each side.

The aim of a summary is to review the major issues of the debate and leave a lasting impression in the audience's mind that is favourable to your side. A summary speaker has been compared to a 'biased news reporter', going over all of the most important arguments that have already occurred but implying that your side won them all.

Summaries can't be prepared before the debate (apart, perhaps, from working out some strong opening or closing statements). This is because neither side knows how the debate will turn out before they've heard the other side's arguments.

Here's a brief guide to giving a summary speech.

Do ...

- ✓ Sum up the major areas of difference between the sides.
- ✓ Look at the debate as a whole; you can amalgamate two or three points into one if they are similar (e.g. 'economic' points or points about practicality).
- ✓ Refer to some of the points from the floor debate, if they support your side, or if they were particularly damaging to your case.
- ✓ Make sure your summary is well structured; it's easy to panic and zig-zag between points.

Don't ...

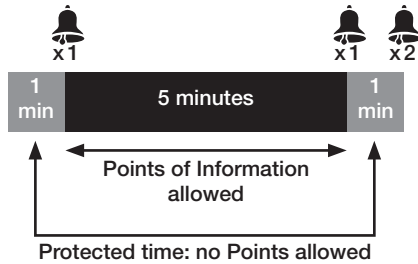
- ✗ Don't focus on trivial points or areas where you agreed.
- ✗ Don't just go through the debate in chronological order listing all the arguments that came up. This won't display areas of difference and is boring.
- ✗ Don't introduce totally new material; you are allowed to use new examples to rebut the other side's arguments, but you may not introduce new lines of argument; your job is to review the debate that happened, not start a new one.

How a debate works

Points of Information

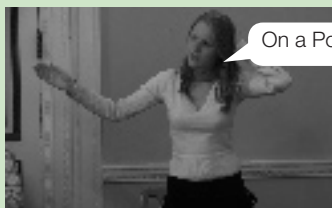
Points of Information (along with rebuttal) are central to the interactivity of debate. They show you can engage with your opponent's arguments. 'Pols' are allowed during the middle 5 minutes of main speeches, but not during summaries:

A 7 - minute main speech



Each speaker has an initial period of 'protected time' so they can introduce their speech and get started on their arguments without being interrupted.

After this minute has elapsed the Timekeeper gives a signal and any member of the *other* team can offer an interruption. To do this, they stand and indicate that they want to make a point by saying:



The person who is giving their speech retains control at all times and can either *accept* the interruption by saying "accepted", "go ahead" or "yes, please", or *decline* by saying "declined", "no thank you" or by indicating with their hand. This ability to accept or decline is a key tactic. The speaker can also:

- Keep the person offering the Point of Information standing until they have finished their sentence.
- Ask them (politely!) to sit down if their question lasts longer than 15 seconds.

If accepted, the person offering the Point has 15 seconds to point out something (a fact, or a contradiction in the argument) which disproves the argument being made by the speaker, or to ask a short question (for instance to ask for clarification if you think they are not saying something important).

Points of Information are a key part of debate so it is vital that all speakers offer at least two or three in every speech they hear, and take at least one (preferably two or three) in every speech they give. Don't offer too many – 'barracking' is rude. Don't take too many or you won't have time to make your own points and will look as if you have lost control.

A sample Point of Information

First Proposition Speaker
"Ladies and gentlemen, a clear example of why the United Nations should be abolished was its failure to stop the USA invading Iraq in ..."

Second Opposition Speaker
rises and says:
"On a Point of Information"

First Proposition Speaker
finishing his or her sentence, says:
"... 2004, despite regularly stating that they wanted to stop the war."

Accept point?

First Proposition Speaker
"Yes, please."
(remains standing)

Second Opposition Speaker
"Just because one country ignored the UN once, does not mean that the whole institution should be abolished."

First Proposition Speaker
"But that wasn't the only time; Israel has ignored Resolution 446 for thirty years and Iran and North Korea defied recent resolutions on nuclear power"

First Proposition Speaker
continuing his or her speech:
"The fact that the UN has no control over what countries do anymore means it cannot do its job, and so it should be abolished."

First Proposition Speaker
"No, thank you."

Second Opposition Speaker
sits down

- Find out more about Points of Information at www.britishdebate.com/schools/mace