



M7: Vocabulary in English

Debating – preparation for SEP

1. What is a debate? - A formal argument where groups or individuals present opposing views about a particular issue according to a set of rules. The topic being debated is called a motion.

It's better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it (Joseph Joubert).

2. What are the rules of a debate?

- The debate is *chaired by the Presidents* whose decision on all matters is final.
- Preliminary questions can be asked by the delegates from the floor right after the introduction of the resolution
-
- The delegates can *use notes* to help with their speeches and they are urged to make notes during the debate.
- If a delegate wants to speak during the debate, he/she must lift their country's name sheet provided for each table.
- If you spot someone breaking these rules you should tell the Speaker. This is called a *point of order*.

TM Remember: You must always be respectful. It is okay to be enthusiastic and forceful, but you must do it in a respectful manner. When your opponents are contradicting you, remain cool and silent and if you feel that your opponent says something that is incorrect, write it down immediately. You will get a chance to rebut him/her later.

3. What is the order of a debate?

- The debate is chaired by the Chairperson. The Speaker then reads out the resolution.
- Question time from the floor: Everyone can participate.
- The first Proposer presents the arguments for the motion.
- The first Opposer presents the arguments against the motion.
- The Proposer's Secunder resumes the arguments for the motion.
- Informal debate among the delegates on one country.
- The Speaker opens debate to the floor (rest of the house).
- Everyone votes (apart from the Speaker).
- Votes are announced (one vote per country) and counted by the Chair.
- The chairperson/speaker announces the result of the vote.

4. What do you call the people taking part?

| | |
|---|---|
| President Chairman/Chairperson | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is addressed: Mr Chairman / Madam Chair(person)• welcomes the delegates• controls the debate• is always neutral• calls alternate sides to speak• must maintain the formality of the debate• has a script |
| Speaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• introduces the debate• reads the resolution |
| Proposer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• speaks for the motion• defines the motion clearly• gives a general outline and develops the argument• shows that there is a need for change• presents evidence to support the resolution (Evidence here is more important than the use of logic.) |
| Proposer's seconder | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• second speaker for the motion• summarizes the arguments from both sides• shows the conflict• explains the plan for change• answers questions raised by the opposer |
| Opposer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• speaks against the motion• takes into account what the proposer has said• shows that the motion is uncalled for, unneeded or unworkable |
| Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• representatives of the different countries• answers questions from the floor |
| Delegates | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• students participating in the debate• represent the countries of the European Union• participate actively in question time, informal and open discussion• decide whether the motion is carried• cast their votes |

6. Examples of motion topics:

- The voting age should be lowered to 16.
- People should be able to drive at 16.
- People should be able to become an MP at 16.
- Everyone should carry an identity card.
- All sports that cause pain and death to animals should be made illegal.
- All activities that cause pain and death to animals should be made illegal.
- Every household should be entitled to a free computer.
- Higher education should be free.
- The UK should be part of the Economic and Monetary Union.
- School uniform leads to better behaved pupils.
- People who don't sort their rubbish for recycling should be charged.
- All cities should have a congestion charge.

7. Useful vocabulary in debating:

to begin a speech: Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen

Ladies and gentlemen, madam Chair.

points of information

asking for points of information: Point of information!

On that point, sir/madam!

answering points of information: Yes, please!

No, thank you!

Declined!

I'll take you in a moment.

interrupting a point of information: Thank you, I got the point!

Structuring a speech

As my previous speaker has pointed out ...

As my next speaker will explain ...

I'm going to present three arguments: first ... second ... third

I've just told you about ... Now I'm going to

placing emphasis

This issue/problem cannot simply be shrugged off/dismissed/ignored

I'm convinced that ...

The information at hand amply demonstrates ...

Let me repeat/reiterate the importance I attach to ...

It is vital/essential/important that we keep in mind ...

Let's stick to the fundamental question of ...

agreement: to reach an agreement

to compromise

to find a compromise

to reach a consensus

strongly agreeing

You're perfectly right

I quite agree with ...

I cannot but agree/I couldn't agree more.

I accept the idea/proposal/suggestion without reservation.

This idea deserves our endorsement/support/backing.

Precisely.

Exactly.

Absolutely.

I am firmly/entirely/fully/completely/wholeheartedly in agreement with ...

mildly agreeing

You may be right there.

That's true, I suppose.

I suppose so.

I'm rather inclined to agree with your idea/suggestion/proposal.

I basically agree, but ...

I agree in principle, but ...

I agree up to a point, but ...

By and large I would accept your idea, but ...

With certain reservations, I would support your

You may be right in saying that, but ...

proposing an agreement

A fair/balanced compromise would be ...

It seems we have established common ground in so far as ...

I hope we can reach agreement along the following lines ...

I think that you may share my opinion/view/belief that ...

Can I take it that we all agree on

resisting agreement

For a variety of reasons I find it difficult to agree to/accept your proposal.

I'm afraid your proposal leaves a great deal to be desired.

To my regret I can see no way of accepting these proposals as they stand.

The proposal falls far short of what is required.

There is no basis for an agreement.

conceding

I must admit that your arguments have convinced me.

I must concede the merits of your case.

There's quite a bit of merit in what you say.

I'm persuaded by your arguments/points.

You have convinced me that ...

In order not to stand in the way of agreement ...

mild disagreement

That's not really how I see it.

I don't really agree.

I can't really go along with you there.

I think you're mistaken.

I'm afraid I can't agree with you there.

I don't quite share your view.

I would hardly go so far as to say ...

I'm not totally convinced by your argument.

I really must take issue with you on this point/here.

strong disagreement

I'm sorry, that's out of the question.

I believe it would be a mistake to ...

I think you're wrong.

Nothing I have heard so far has convinced/persuaded me that ...

I'm afraid I (totally) have to disagree with you.

I beg to differ.

I'm sorry I don't agree at all.

I simply can't agree to this.

Under no circumstances could I agree to ...

Of course not.

I'm decidedly/entirely/wholeheartedly against/opposed to this idea.

rebutting arguments

Let's take a look at what the other side has said.
First I'd like to examine the last speaker's arguments.

raising doubt

It is all very well to say ..., but ...
I can't help feeling that ...
The idea/proposal has some shortcomings/deficiencies/flaws.
It is open to question whether ...
There is room for doubt whether ...
I'm sceptical/doubtful about ...

countering opposing arguments

I don't think it's a valid argument to say that ...
I think it may be going too far to say that ...
In spite of/Despite ..., I still feel/maintain that ...
I'm glad you brought this up, but ...

providing additional information

To shed more light on the situation/matter let me add/allow me to add ...
Please allow me to add a word about ...
Perhaps I should be more specific.
Without going too much into detail, I should perhaps mention ...
I think it would be helpful to add/ point out

hedging

I take your point ..., but ...
I understand what you're saying ..., but ...
I see/know what you mean, but ...
I hear where you're coming from on this, but ...
This interesting issue could perhaps be taken up later.
I feel a decision at this stage would be premature.
We should not act in haste on such a key matter.
I believe the whole issue needs to be looked at more carefully.

checking understanding

Are you saying that ...
Are you suggesting that ...
Are you implying that ...
If I understand you correctly ...
If I follow you ...

interrupting

Can I come in here?
I'm terribly sorry to interrupt you, but ...
Forgive me for interrupting, but ...
I don't want to interrupt, but ...
If I might just say a word about ...
Could I come in at this point?
If I can just stop you for a moment
Before you go any further, may I point out/indicate/explain

handling an interruption

Perhaps we could return to your point later.
If you could bear with me for a moment, I shall deal with that point a little later.
I take your point and shall be dealing with that in a moment.
With your permission I would like to finish what I was saying.

With all due respect I should like to finish the point I was making.
If you would allow me to continue/finish?

referring back

As we are saying earlier ...
To go back to what I was just saying ...
To go back to what X was saying earlier ...
We appear to be straying from the point/ our purpose/mandate ...
I do not wish to labour the point, but ...
As I said/mentioned earlier/before ...
If I may just return/go back/revert briefly to what I was saying

introducing new elements

I should now like to turn briefly to the question/problem of ...
At this point I would like to raise the subject of ...
There are some additional matters/questions which must be considered here.
Another thought that occurs to me is ...
I now realize that I should have mentioned/referred to/said a few words about ...
I think we need to deal with other issues first.

summing up an argument

We had a useful exchange of views, the main points of which may be summarized as follows ...
If I might just go over the main points made?
To sum up/recapitulate, one can say that ...
All the proposed solutions boil down to ...
The most persuasive/compelling argument made today is ...

concluding

We're running out of time so we're going to have to stop here.
To go over what's been said ...
I've listened to both sides of the argument ...
I think I can sum it up ...
Unless anyone has anything else to add, I think that's it.
I think the following general conclusion may be drawn from the discussion ...

to round off a speech

And that's why this motion must stand/fall!
For all these reasons, this motion must stand/fall!
For the reasons given, ...

general expressions

to hold the floor
to call the house to order
to be in breach of a rule
a point is well taken/not well taken = the Chairperson/Speaker rules about a point of order
my question for the is = if a member of team wants to cross-examine the other side
a motion is carried = it wins
a motion is defeated = it loses
to abstain from a vote = not to vote
I declare this motion carried/defeated

8. Terms in debating

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Resolution | Formal subject in dispute |
| Affirmative/Proposer | Team supporting the resolution |
| Affirmative cases | This is generally used to refer to the part of the affirmative position which demonstrates that there is a need for change because there is a serious problem (need) which the present system cannot solve (inherency) but which is none the less, solvable (solvency). |
| A priori | Literally, prior to. Usually an argument which indicates that a particular issue should be resolved before all others. Frequently used to argue that procedural concerns such as topicality should be considered before substantive issues such as advantages. |
| Brief | A prepared argument with evidence and arguments already structured on the page. |
| Case | collection of arguments supporting the resolution |
| Circumvention | Negative argument proving that the plan will not solve the problem. People are opposed to the plan (motivation), they will find a way to "get around" the plan (mechanism), and this will stop the plan from being effective (impact). |
| Counter plan | A "better solution" than the affirmative plan which is offered by the negative/opposer. It is like a "little affirmative case" and should have a plan and solvency as well as be competitive with the affirmative plan. |
| Negative/Opposer | Team opposing the resolution |
| Discursive impact | Derived from the word discourse, this argument usually says that the language used within the debate is more important than the issues debated. Discursive impacts are usually claimed by critiques. |
| Evidence | Authoritative quoted published material entered into the debate to support the arguments being made. |
| Extension | Continuing to advance and elaborate on an issue through several speeches of the debate. |
| Flow | Notes taken by debaters during the debate and then used as their notes while they speak. There is a specific technique to flowing you will need to learn. |
| Impact | Explanation of why something is important, and thus how it influences the outcome of the debate. Usually impacts need to be proven, not just assumed. |
| Plan | Proposal for policy action presented by the affirmative. Usually includes: agent, action, extent, funding, enforcement, etc. |
| Position | An argument |
| Preemption or preempt | An argument designed to respond to another argument that has not been made, but is anticipated. |
| Prep time | Time between speeches when debaters prepare. |
| Rebuttal | Shorter, later speeches in a debate round where the issues built in the constructive speeches are argued over. |
| Refutation | Answering or criticizing ideas and issues presented by the other team. |
| Resolution | The topic of that particular debate and the paper built on it. |
| Run | Read a position, make an argument. |
| Spread | Making many, many arguments in an attempt to prevent the other team from answering them all. |
| Status Quo | The present system. The way things are now, as the debate goes on. |
| Voting issue | An argument stipulating that this issue alone, and its fate, should determine the decision in the debate. Often claimed for topicality issues. |