

I'll just take a moment here to say something very important.

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER write out a debate speech in full.

That isn't debating; it's essay writing.

You can be good at writing essays and good at debating, and you can learn a lot about how to write essays from doing debating, but they are NOT THE SAME THING.

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I hope I made that clear.

This sorting out of your own arguments should take another five minutes. Now it's time to consider the other side's possible arguments and how to rebut them. Do this by taking turns, one person stating the arguments, the other one rebutting them. As well as working out what you will say in rebuttal, this will both get you into the mind set of the other side (which is vital), while also sharpening up your rebuttal responses. It's a bit like footballers passing a ball around to warm up just before kick off.

Your final task is to find the point of clash (see the advice above on the point of clash on page 53). This should be the thing you keep in mind all the way through the debate, your guiding star. You need to keep coming back to it, and keep showing the judge that you are on the winning side of it, particularly if you are speaking last. Very often, it will be the answer to the first question: what is the debate about? Here, the point of clash in the policy motion is the right of the state to intervene to protect the health of the

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community against the individual's right to make their own choices. You have to show that the damage that meat eating causes to health and the climate outweighs the loss of freedom entailed by a tax on meat. In the ideas motion, the point of clash is whether happiness is brought by material or non-material things. You have to show that while material things are important, they are neither as durable nor as reliable sources of happiness as non-material things. Say the point of clash to each other a few times, as a kind of mantra, to make sure it is at the front of your mind.

By now, your brain should be singing, and you should be ready to talk for England (literally, if you are representing England in the World Schools Debating Competition). If you're feeling nervous, embrace it. As every actor, performer and sportsperson knows, that adrenaline rush will sharpen up your performance and make you more focused. Gather up your notes, take a swig of water, and head for the debating chamber.

Long prep

Essentially, do everything as above, only do it more slowly. Set aside an evening (or lunchtime) by yourself for the initial silent preparation; then get together with your debate partner for another evening (or lunchtime) to share ideas and plan.

One significant difference between long prep and short prep is of course that with long prep you are allowed to research the topic, in particular to use the internet. This is both a blessing and a curse. It can help you to feel more confident if you have more facts and examples at your fingertips; however, there is a danger that you can be so weighed down with facts and examples that you lose sight of the arguments. Remember, debates are won by the quality of arguments. Facts and examples are only there to support the arguments. So, while it might be helpful to accumulate a lot of data in the first phase of your preparation, once you start refining your arguments, you should be ruthlessly selective and only use data that supports your central argument.

Also, be careful (especially on the internet) with the sources of your research. Not all websites are equally reliable. In general, websites

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