

Masterclass

In this chapter, we'll be listening in on a high quality debate, analysing what the debaters do well, and thinking about how they could do even better.

One of the best ways to learn how to do something is to observe an expert doing it. This applies very much to debating. Watch as many debates as you can, either live or online. Watch them as a judge would watch (see Chapter 8), analysing what the debaters are doing well, and what they could do better.

Debates (especially good ones) are often fast and furious, and it can be hard to keep up with them. That's one advantage of watching them on video, where you can pause the film to reflect and make notes, much as a sports coach might analyse a game. It's rare, though, to have a full transcript of a debate. This chapter gives you a transcript. The debate never actually happened - it is a work of fiction - but it is based on the many debates I have watched and judged over the years. I've chosen to use British Parliamentary (BP) format, as I think it is slightly more demanding than Mace, and gives more opportunity to exemplify the key debating skills. See Chapter 2, How Debating Works, to remind yourself of how BP works. All the debaters are experienced and skilled, though they are not perfect, and do make mistakes. I give a running commentary on the debate in my notes. At the end, the judge gives a rank order; see if, as you read the debate, you can work out what the rank order should be.