



## E. Putting it all together

*Information and Activity Plans for School Debaters*

### INTRODUCTION

In the previous activities we have examined some of the key components of debating, and concentrated on individual skills. However, in a real debate you need to bring all of these activities together at one time to deliver a performance good enough to win your side of the case and, if taking part in a competition, to get you through to the next round.

This section looks at drawing all the skills together in two different ways. Firstly, there is a set of activities based on the 2005/2006 final of the Law Society of Scotland's Donald Dewar Memorial Debate Tournament. This lets you analyse the performance of polished speakers; observing how they construct and deliver their speeches and engage in argument with their opposing teams. Secondly, we run a full debate, just as you would in a real debating competition.

***The Society would like to thank the teams who took part in the final, and their coaches, for supporting this project and the use of the DVD as a learning resource.***



## Activity G1 – Judging a final

### Learning Outcomes

*By the end of the session students should be able to:*

- Identify key elements of performance in a live debate
- Identify the strengths and areas for development of other debaters
- Offer developmental feedback on performance

### Resources Required

- DVD of the 2005/2006 final  
This was sent to all schools in Scotland in September, marked for the attention of the debating coach or Head of English. Extra copies may be available on request.
- Equipment to display DVD to a group
- Copies of the marking guidance
- Copies of the marking standards

### Introduction

The next session encourages students to take part in a real debate, however, as a final part of the preparation this session uses the DVD of a previous final to allow students to see how the format works in practice and also the standard of debating which last year's finalists achieved.

### Running the Activity

Introduce the DVD, explaining that it is from the 2005/2006 final and that it shows four different teams taking part in a debate:

#### FIRST DEBATE

##### PROPOSITION

##### **Carnoustie High School**

Team: Anna Forrest and Sarah Nash

vs.

##### OPPOSITION

##### **Hutchesons' Grammar School**

Team: Felicity Loudon and Alasdair Forrest

#### SECOND DEBATE

##### PROPOSITION

##### **Dollar Academy**

Team: Tarni Duhre and Katie Trim

vs.

##### OPPOSITION

##### **Earlston High School**

Team: Ewen Maclean and Sarah Sutherland

Explain that this is a final, and that these are experienced and talented debaters, so the standard is far higher than would be seen in a typical first or second round tie, but is an example of what can be achieved by people of their own age, over time and through practise



Distribute the marking guidance to students, and discuss each element in turn to ensure the students understand what is being looked for.

Tell the students that they are going to act as judges for the final, and see if they come to the same decision as the experienced judges on the night.

They are going to be given a marking sheet each, and will be allowed to watch the debate unfold. They should carefully examine each performance and assess it against the set criteria. In the comments sections they should log particular observations and what feedback they might give the debaters to help them to improve their performance the next time.

If students don't know the outcome of the debate already, they should also be encouraged to try to identify the winning team and the runners-up and give reasons for their choices



## MARKING GUIDANCE – ELEMENTS TO MARK

CONTENT (60 marks)	Areas to Consider
<b>Structure</b>	Was there a clear and logical structure to the individual speeches? Was it related to the speech the other member of the team was going to make/had made? Was the structure easy to follow? Was the sequence logical?
<b>Roles of Speakers</b>	Did each speaker fulfil the role relating to his or her position in the debate, as outlined above? Did the speakers work well as a team? Speakers that do not perform their role should be penalised.
<b>Relevance</b>	Was the speech relevant to the motion and/or the definitions provided? Did any irrelevant material hinder the progress of the argument? Was humour, if used, relevant? Were any relevant areas deliberately or accidentally avoided?
<b>Evidence</b>	Were facts and figures presented to support the arguments made? Were sources of authority cited? Was it possible to determine the level of research the team had engaged in? Did the team use evidence to rebut and counter arguments from the other side? Did they challenge the evidence of the other party?
<b>Analysis</b>	Was the evidence interpreted by the speaker and related to the argument in a perceptive and appropriate manner? Were issues graded according to relevance and strength? Were examples used to emphasise the arguments being put forward? Was the analysis logical & consistent? Were there contradictions, flaws, assumptions made?
<b>Rebuttal and Points of Information</b>	<p>Did the speaker rebut the arguments of the preceding speakers on the other side? Did they fail to rebut any arguments? Did they appear to understand the arguments made? Did they use evidence in their rebuttal? A key skill is the undermining of the other side whilst at the same time bolstering your own arguments – this should be rewarded.</p> <p>In relation to points of information the above applies as well as considering if the speakers have accepted and offered sufficient points of information. The information provided above on Points of Information should be considered. A speaker who offers no or very few points should be penalised. A speaker who accepts no points should be heavily penalised.</p>
<b>Timing</b>	Whilst short over/under running should not be penalised any significant divergence from the set times should be, in relation to its length and any extenuating circumstances.

STYLE (40 marks)	Areas to Consider
<b>Confidence</b>	Does the speaker appear confident? Do they take command of the room and of the topic? Do they maintain eye contact and speak with flair?
<b>Speaking style</b>	<p>Do they vary their tone, speed and volume? Do they use appropriate humour? Do they project their voice? Are they fluent? Do they 'um, ah, and err'? Do they 'connect' with the audience? Do they use repetition to make a point? Does the speech flow? Do they use gestures and body language to reinforce points?</p> <p>Gimmicks, 'pantomime', and stylistic issues that detract from the content and the argument should be penalised.</p>
<b>Use of Notes</b>	Speakers should only use notes and only refer to them intermittently. Reading a brief verbatim quote from another speaker or authoritative source may be acceptable, in virtually no other circumstances is it permissible to read from notes – speakers who do this are not debating and should be penalised heavily.
<b>Off-the-cuff responses</b>	Speakers whose style is consistent when addressing questions raised as a point of information, or in rebutting the other side's arguments, should be rewarded.



## MARKING GUIDANCE – MARKS TO AWARD

Main Speech	Reply Speech	Level
90-100	45-50	This is a world-class debater who has just delivered a speech which is among the best you have ever heard. This is <i>'I have a dream...'</i> , <i>'Gettysburg Address'</i> , or <i>'We will fight them on the beaches...'</i> standard speech.
80-90	40-45	A potential winner of the competition; fluent, eloquent, engaging of the audience, responding well to questions, addressing the issues raised by the other team, structured and logical. Technically competent across all the criteria.
70-80	35-40	A very strong speaker, likely to get to the final – but no feeling that they are a potential overall winner. Competent in all areas, logical, structured, with a degree of flair.
60-70	30-35	A strong speaker likely to do well in future rounds. Technically competent but perhaps with one or two weaker areas. Not difficult to listen to but no real flair. A structured and organised presentation but not one that seems to conclusively build into a winning argument.
50-60	25-30	Just competent as a debater. They are clearly aware of the standards they are trying to meet but have not displayed any real flair. The argument may have been a little disjointed and there will have been some issues of style. Someone to be encouraged to try again in the future.
40-50	20-25	Someone who has failed to meet several of the criteria. Whilst they may still be excellent in some areas there were significant flaws in both content and style. These might include contradictory arguments, or those which contradict their partner, lack of any evidence, failing to give any points, and so on.
0-30	0-20	Serious failure to meet the criteria. This person is likely to read from their paper, have serious flaws in their argument, flaws in their timekeeping, and have contributed little to the debate.



**MARKING STANDARDS – MAIN SPEECHES - HANDOUT**

**Name of Speaker** ..... **Time** ..... (5 min)  
**Position** .....

			COMMENTS	
<b>C O N T E N T</b>	<b>I n t r o</b>	Define interpretation of motion Define/repeat roles of speakers Define key arguments	<i>Marks out of 60 for 'content'</i>	
	<b>D e v e l o p m e n t</b>	<b>Did they:</b> develop arguments as set out in intro? clearly 'label' each argument? explain & analyse each argument in sufficient detail? use evidence & examples for each argument? tie each argument back to their main case? use a logical sequence? use only relevant argument? effectively link each argument/speech on team? effectively rebut arguments from the opposing side?		
	<b>C L O S E</b>	Sum up each argument Link to next/previous speaker Sum up overall case		
<b>S T Y L E</b>		Confidence / Authority Complexity / Pace Enthusiasm / Rapport Eye contact Voice - Volume - Pitch - Emphasis  Use of Notes Distracting Habits	<i>Marks out of 40 for 'style'</i>	



## MARKING STANDARDS – REPLY SPEECHES - HANDOUT

				COMMENTS
C O N T E N T	I n t r o	Define interpretation of motion Define/repeat roles of speakers Define key arguments	<i>Marks out of 30 for 'content'</i>	
	D e v e l o p m e n t	<b>Did they:</b> Clearly sum up key themes of their side of the motion? tie each argument back to their main case? Clearly tackle the themes present by the opposing side? Draw on themes introduced during the floor speeches		
	C L O S E	Sum up overall case A persuasive closing statement		
S T Y L E		Confidence / Authority Complexity / Pace Enthusiasm / Rapport Eye contact Voice - Volume - Pitch - Emphasis Distracting Habits	<i>Marks out of 20 for 'style'</i>	



## Assessing Progress

- Did the students come up with similar observations and scores?
- Did they 'rank' the teams in the same order?
- Did they engage with the process of scoring?
- Could they list the key arguments for each side?
- Did they correctly identify the winning team and the runners-up?
- If the students did not all have similar observations, or did not rank the teams in the same way, can the students explain why and what particular aspects of each debate were the "selling" points for them?

## Finishing Up

Ask the students how they found judging? Was it difficult to balance the different factors? Is it easier to rank speaking style over content?

If you plan on carrying out the next activity, a full debate, encourage the students to reflect on the DVD over the next period of preparation.

## Variations

- If you have more time you can use a group to develop a marking standard and a marking sheet. If you are simply debating within your school you could then adopt these as your own in-house guidance. If you are entering the Society's competition then you should compare these to our marking standards and see how many areas the students correctly identified as important.



## Activity G2 – Running a debate

### Learning Outcomes

*By the end of the session students should be able to:*

- Take part in a formal debate in a classroom setting
- Analyse the performance of their colleagues using a standard marking matrix

### Resources Required

- Classroom in debate layout
- Lectern
- Gavel/bell (optional)
- Stop-watch
- Tape recorder (optional)
- Video camera (optional)

### Introduction

This is the final session, bringing everything together and letting students take part in a debate similar to the competitive format.

### Organising the Debate

This section is shorter than for the other activities, as we refer you to the Tournament Rules for how to run a debate. However, we thought we should give you some final tips:

1. Allow the students plenty of preparation and research time – this makes it less stressful
2. Issue each speaker with a copy of the Tournament Rules – so that they have all of the information they need to hand
3. Before the debate allow a short speech workshop with each team, helping make sure they are fully prepared for a debate
4. Involve a larger group by asking the students not taking part in the final debate to each research and prepare a one-minute floor speech on a key topic
5. You can also split the additional students in two – running a session with each team and their supporters to brainstorm, analyse the motion, and develop arguments



6. It works best if a teacher chairs the session, but involve pupils by asking them to be time keepers – giving the appropriate time signals and recording how long each speech is
7. Encourage the students who are not taking part in the final debate to prepare good questions which will challenge the speakers (which in our competition the opposing school will certainly do!)
8. Run this session more formally – much of the training up until now has tried to be informal, but if your teams are preparing for competitive debate, in the Society's competition or others, is the time to run this as if it were your school were meeting an external school.
9. Finally, **GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY IT!**

## **ASSESSING PROGRESS**

- Did the students manage to remember and combine all of the skills learned the activities so far (A to F), in the context of a real debate?
- Did the students' performance get better during this more formal session?
- Did the speakers manage to keep within the allotted times?
- Did the students cope well with challenging questions?
- Did the students develop any additional distracting habits?
- Were the best-performing students in this session the same students who performed well in earlier sessions, or did other students perform well under pressure?
- Did the students mark *each other* differently during this session?



## **FINISHING UP**

How did the students feel about this formal, timed session? Did they find it difficult to “think on their feet” and answer challenging questions which interrupted their “flow”? Explain to them that when questions are asked it is acceptable to take short pauses, to prepare themselves for answering the questions. Having assessed their progress, help each student to understand their individual strengths, together with any areas they might wish to focus on and practise if entering a competitive debate such as the Law Society of Scotland’s Donald Dewar Memorial Schools Debate.