



Debate contest evaluation aspects

The Evaluation Table is organized in the 4 main phases of the debate:

1. Opening speech by the leader
2. Argument by the two speakers
3. Free debate
4. Conclusions by the leader

For each phase, the judges are asked to evaluate the following areas:

1. Contents, Ability to argue and argumentative strategy.
2. Presentation style.

Evaluating the contents

- a. Knowing and understanding the topic
- b. Getting the gist
- c. Use and variety of relevant sources

Knowing and understanding the topic: conveying mastery and confidence, showing an in-depth knowledge and investigating the essential aspects of the thesis to be supported.

Getting the gist: means the ability to highlight the main strengths of a thesis from the start; but also the ability to bring the discussion back to the central issues, if the debate were to lead elsewhere.

Use and variety of sources: it is very important to specify the sources in order to make what is being asserted reliable.

A quote without a source is of little value and easily disputed.

They must be clear, certain and authoritative sources.

The use of quotes should never override the development of argumentative discourse, but be at the service of it.

Evaluating the ability to argue and the argumentative strategy.

- a. Logical construction and order
- b. Thesis and antithesis play
- c. Well-formed constructs consistent with the team's line
- d. Involvement of team members: it means the ability of the group to act in harmony, coordinating the speeches and valuing the different contributions.



Logical construction and order:

means the demonstrative ability, the ability to show that only certain consequences can be deduced from certain preliminary remarks. Then, it will be necessary to demonstrate the value of these preliminary remarks, defending them from the adversary criticism.

Thesis and antithesis play: In the steps following the speech of the first speaker (the leader), it will be very important to put the opponent in trouble by including the critical points of the previous speech in his speech. It implies the ability to show the weaknesses of the opponent's argument (the so-called "fallacies") both in the preliminary remarks and in the argumentative method.

Well-formed constructs: Like every topic or oral presentation, also in this case a well-structured thesis must have a subdivision of the construct in three parts: opening words, development and conclusion.

The order of such construct can be skillfully hidden for "strategic" purposes (not to show the best qualities immediately, hold impressive demonstrations for the conclusions etc.), but it must be clear to the team.

Assessthestyle

- a. Clarity of presentation
- b. Ability to involve and maintain interest
- c. Non-verbal behavior

Clarity of presentation: simple sentences, short and consequential periods, comprehensible words or, if sectorial (technicalities, acronyms, Anglicisms, etc.), properly explained and contextualized.

Ability to involve and maintain interest: ability to create empathy from the very first sentences with the audience; use of emotionally involving examples and stories; ability to dramatize a concept or, on the contrary, ability to use irony.

Scores

The scores provided by the Evaluation Table range from 1 to 5 and correspond to the following levels of judgement for the 2 areas just described (content, argumentative and counter argumentative logic; speaking ability and style) and for each of the 4 phases of the challenge mentioned above (opening, argumentation, free debate, conclusion):

- not completely satisfactory: 1 point;
- satisfactory: 2 points;
- fairly good - good: 3 points;
- very good: 4 points;
- excellent: 5 points.

Team Leader opening speech

The leader will receive an assessment based on his/her specific role, in which he/she will have to demonstrate that he/she is able to perform the following actions:

Opening speech: general introduction of the topic, structure of the speech of his/her team and main



thesis supported. The presentation of the topics that will be discussed in detail.

He/she will have to show that he/she knows the topic well, get the gist, and develop a series of contents that help to focus on the aspects on which the team's reasoning should develop.

(Note: we use the conditional because the argumentative strategy should also be adapted to what the opposing team will support: continuing on one's own line without taking into account what the opponents say is the best way to lose the challenge). The ability to keep up the attention and the style of presentation are also evaluated.

The two speakers

The two speakers have very different roles within the debate, although integrated with each other and with the whole team strategy. In particular, the one we will call "Speaker 1" (the first to speak after the leader's opening speech) has the specific task of showing the weak points of the opponent's thesis, arguing them. On the other hand, the "Speaker 2" has to reply point by point to the criticism received by the opponent "Speaker 1" and strengthen the thesis of his/her team, eventually counterattacking.

In the evaluation of the First and Second Speaker, it is necessary to distinguish the judgement between the contents, the argumentative and counter argumentative logic and the speaking ability. As already discussed above, the judges must focus not only on the use of sources, the consistency of the arguments and the speech, but also on the manner and effectiveness of the presentation.

Free debate phase

The free debate phase is very sensitive and complex. It follows the speeches of the two speakers and comes before the conclusions of the leader. In this phase, in order to facilitate the evaluation of the judges and, therefore, the preparation of the students, we suggest to evaluate only the two macro areas: contents and argumentative and counter argumentative logic and the style of the WHOLE TEAM (i.e. the leader and the two speakers) during the free debate. Therefore, the judges have to try to go beyond the impression left by each individual component to reach an overall judgement. Obviously, the more interesting and appropriate the contents, arguing or counter-arguing in an engaging way and with an effective style, the more the team members will be able to get a high score.

Team Leader closing speech:

Conclusions: summarize and defend the argument of one's team. Final appeal to the audience and the judges. Also in this case, the effectiveness of verbal and non-verbal communication must be evaluated.

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