

Roundhills Debating Club

Are you ready for the Roundhills Debating Club meeting next Thursday? In case you are still working on your talks, we've asked our last month's debate champions to give some tips.

Huan

If you want to be good at debating, you have to learn to put your personal views to one side. It doesn't really matter what you personally believe, you have to stay objective. It's fine to be passionate and try to get people on your side, but that isn't the same thing as being aggressive or bursting into tears.



Sinead

You have to be flexible, because you might have to argue for something you don't even agree with. It's a good idea just to try and come up with lots of different arguments to begin with. Then you can start to analyse them and see if they really are strong arguments or not. A good tip is to avoid any statements that are too extreme. As soon as you find yourself using language such as 'always' or 'never', it's a clue that your argument might not actually be that strong.

Martin

Preparation is really important. Take some time to think through all your arguments really well. Do you have any evidence to support what you're saying? Think of some good examples you can give; it can be hard to think of these on the spot. Are you sure that the point you want to make is really relevant or logical? Be sure that your opponent can't easily find flaws in what you're saying.



1 In pairs, discuss the questions.

- 1 How is a debate different from a conversation?
- 2 What is a typical structure of a formal debate? Put the points below in the correct order.
 - a The debate is summed up and winner announced.
 - b The speakers for the proposition and opposition present the main arguments.
 - c Teams hear the statement for the debate and in their groups come up with arguments.
 - d Speakers from both teams present their rebuttals.

- 2 Read some advice on a student Debating Club website on how to be good at debating. Choose the three pieces of advice you find most useful. Compare your ideas with a partner.

- 3 Study the Life Skills box and match tips 1-6 with texts A-C. Some texts match with more than one tip.

LIFE SKILLS | How to be good at debating

- 1 Think of lots of possible arguments to support your statement.
- 2 Analyse the arguments to see how strong they are, and adapt them as needed.
- 3 Back up your arguments with good reasons and examples or research.
- 4 Make your arguments persuasive, but avoid being too overly emotional.
- 5 Keep your points relevant.
- 6 Don't exaggerate or make wild claims.

- 4 Read the statement below and the counterargument to it. Which do you agree with most? Say why.

Statement: There is too much explicit footage of violence, crime and war shown on television news.

Counterargument: The use of such footage is justified. People need to see exactly what is going on in the world, so they can do something about it.

- 5  2.19 Listen to two students starting to debate on the topic from Exercise 4. Match arguments a-f below to each speaker, in the order they are mentioned.

Speaker 1 1 2 3

Speaker 2 1 2 3

- a Watching violence on TV creates more violence. There have been cases where seeing news items about brutal crime has led to copycat crimes being carried out.
 - b There is little research evidence to back up the idea that watching violence makes you aggressive.
 - c Watching war, crime and violence on TV news has a negative impact on our emotions. There was research carried out on this at the University of Sussex.
 - d People have always been interested in violence, e.g. Shakespeare's plays are sometimes violent.
 - e The speaker doesn't enjoy watching violence and feels it is unnecessary to show it on the news.
 - f Watching upsetting news items can make people care more, not less. Research shows that it may make people give more to charity.
- 6 Look again at the arguments in Exercise 5. Which of them are the strongest/weakest? Which Speaker will be more successful at the debate? Say why.

- 7  2.19 Study the Speaking box. Listen again and complete the phrases with the words from the box.

case conclude evidence point reinforces several support vital

SPEAKING | Supporting your arguments in a debate

Explaining why your argument is valid

It is ¹ _____ to realise that ... The crucial ² _____ is that ...

It is clearly the ³ _____ that ... I would argue that ...

Referring to research/statistics

In ⁴ _____ of this, I could point to ...

In a recent study, researchers found that ...

According to ... It has been found that ...

There is some ⁵ _____ that ...

Giving examples to back up your argument

It is easy to think of many instances of this in daily life.

For instance, ...

There have been ⁶ _____ cases where this has happened ...

Summarising/Linking your argument to what has already been said

So, as we have seen ... therefore we must ⁷ _____ that ...

This clearly ⁸ _____ everything I have said up until this point.

In light of what was said earlier, we can see that ...

- 8 Work in pairs. Choose one of the topics and make a list of arguments for and against the statement.

The media does not have the right to report on the private lives of well-known people.

The government should have some control over what is published by the media.

Friends are more important in life than family.

Teenagers should share the responsibility for running the household with their parents.

- 9 Do the task below.

LIFE SKILLS | Project

Work in groups of four. Prepare for a debate in the next class. Use the tips from the lesson and the language from the Speaking box to help you.

- Find a pair who have chosen the same topic as you in Exercise 8. Decide which pair will argue for and which against.
- With your partner, analyse your arguments and find the best two.
- In each pair, Student A presents the first argument.
- Then Student B in each pair presents the second argument.
- Listen to the arguments of the other pair and think of some counterarguments.
- At the end of the debate, assess your arguments and decide who won the debate.