

Alfred Snider, Sparking the Debate, 2013

Chapter 7: Training Techniques for Critical Advocacy

This chapter is one of the most important in the book because it focuses on what should be your most important goal. Obviously you want to get people interested in debating and joining your group, but your most important goal should be to educate as many people as possible in the skills of critical thinking, public speaking, argument design and decision making. Thus, training is core to your mission.

Basics of Sustainable Training

Let me begin by outlining some basic assumptions behind successful debate training systems.

- *Training is sequential, moving from the easy to more challenging in nature.* Many training exercises can be used throughout an individual's debating career. However, they are best implemented by starting with the more basic exercises and working toward the more complex. In this chapter they have been ordered on that basis.
- *Repetition is important.* Since the exercises teach skills, repetition is essential. Only by constant practice can a debater improve.
- *Training must be active.* If people are listening to a long lecture, learning is falling short. They need to be thinking, speaking, practicing, and then practicing even more. Always keep those at the training involved and active.
- *Training should involve debating a variety of topics.* Many debate formats involve changing topics (also called motions) frequently; therefore those being trained should be exposed to a wide variety of topics. Varying topics will also challenge your trainees. If participants are asked to debate different topics, they cannot copy the arguments of those who spoke earlier and must develop their own ideas. Topics from over 260 debate tournaments from all around the world can be found at DEBATE MOTION CENTRAL

<http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/>

- *Speeches should be short.* Limit speeches to 1-4 minutes. You have three good reasons for doing so. First, someone doesn't have to speak for a long time for you to hear problems in delivery, organization, or argument development. Second, if everyone delivers a short speech, you have time to repeat them. Third, short speeches can mean shorter training sessions. People dislike lengthy sessions and might not return if they think the sessions are too long.
- *Sessions should start and end on time.* When people come to a training exercise, they are giving one of their most valuable resources, their time. People are busy, and they have to fit the training into their schedule. If you start on time, people will realize that they must arrive on time. If you end on time, they will know that they can move on to their next activity. Making yourself to start and end promptly will also force you to use every minute of the time you have.
- *Training sessions should be scheduled on a regular basis.* Have trainings at the same time on the same day each week. Regular trainings are useful because people can build the sessions into their weekly schedules. Because university debaters have different schedules, you might want to modify this practice. My university team has three or four trainings a week, and we encourage people to come to the sessions that fit their schedules.
- *Training should utilize peer trainers.* I strongly believe in peer learning. We have many things to teach each other, and often debate groups have a shortage of highly skilled trainers. Those with more experience (even just a bit more) can be extremely valuable as leaders in these training activities. And, of course, those who train also learn from the exercise. Using peer trainers also empowers people and increases their commitment to the group.
- *Each debater should create a training booklet.* Encourage those attending training events to take notes on all they do. These notes will come in handy while preparing for and during debates, and will be valuable when they become facilitators later. Encourage them to create a permanent journal for

their notes rather than keep them on random sheets of paper. If these notes are in one place and easily accessible then they will be more valuable.

- *Training should be fun.* To keep people coming, you must make training fun. Try to maintain a light atmosphere that encourages occasional laughter. Always include positive comments when giving criticism, and never take yourself too seriously.

Training Exercises

Below are some basic training exercises you can use to teach debate-oriented skills. Each sets out goals, procedure, and cautions (or difficulties to look out for) about using the exercise. Many of the exercises are described in some videos, which you might want to watch while planning your training sessions:

International Debate Academy Slovenia 2011 <https://vimeo.com/32747688>

World Schools Debate Academy 2010 <https://vimeo.com/13450158> and <https://vimeo.com/13450759>

These are just a few of the exercises and drills available. See the resource list at the end of this chapter. When planning your training sessions, analyze your debaters' weaknesses and then use appropriate drills and exercises to deal with these.

Regardless of the exercise you use, make sure to evaluate them. Ask participants which they learned the most from, which they enjoyed the most, and which helped them the most when they actually debated.

Speaking

Warm Up Speeches and a Short Debate (basic)

Goals:

- Help debaters overcome their initial nervousness about public speaking.
- Help debaters overcome their fear of being in a debate.
- Identify and work on significant problems—e.g., difficulties with English, serious speech anxiety.

Procedure:

Introduction:

Explain the importance of public speaking skills. Tell debaters that we all need to improve them and that they will be able to do so in a comfortable environment for learning.

Part One: Short Speeches

1. Ask debaters to give one-minute speeches on a topic about which they are comfortable, for example:

- Favorite pet animal
- Favorite vacation spot
- Least favorite media figure
- Worst movie ever seen
- “I wish my parents would....”
- “I wish my school would...”
- Favorite subject in school
- Favorite sport
- Gadget they most want

2. After each speech, mention two things the speaker did well and one he needs to improve.

Part Two: Short Debate

1. Divide the class into pairs and assign each a motion or proposition. One debater will speak for 2 minutes in support of it, the other in opposition.

2. Give the class 5 minutes to prepare **one** major argument for their side. Tell them to remember what they need to work on from their previous speech.

3. Ask one pair to begin the exercise. Have one side give his speech while the other takes notes. Have the second on the pair give her speech.

4. Give the speakers your feedback. Be positive, but notice whether they have improved on their previous challenge. Have their partner also make comments on any feature of the speech they wish.

5. Repeat the procedure with the remaining pairs.

Part Three: Refutation

1. If you have time, give debaters 3 minutes to prepare a 1 minute answer to what the other side said.
2. Ask each pair to speak and then give them your feedback.

Cautions:

- Be alert for those experiencing a lot of speech anxiety, shyness, etc. BUT, make people speak. Then show support for them, “I knew you could do it...” You may need to give a word of encouragement, such as “talk about that more” if they begin to falter.
- Emphasize improvement rather than skill level. Just getting better is all that is important.

Public Speaking Exercises /Adverse Conditioning (advanced)

Goals:

- Identify specific weaknesses in the way debaters deliver a speech.
- Train debaters to critique others, and thus themselves.
- Create climate of constructive mutual criticism.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Procedure:

Phase One: Inventory

1. Ask for five volunteers. One will be the speaker and the other four will act as “critics,” paying attention to and commenting on: language use (including “crutch” words); hand gestures; face and body movements; and, overall style. Assign each critic a number from 1 to 4.
2. Have a debater suggest a topic on which the speaker will speak immediately (speaking problems are more readily apparent if debaters are unprepared). The speech should last about 2 minutes. Then invite the four critics to make brief comments. Add other comments you think important. Ask the speaker to write

down the comments. Then ask critic 1 to speak and the previous speaker to become a critic. Repeat the procedure until all members of the group have spoken.

Phase Two: Working on Two Items

1. Choose a new topic. In their groups of five, have each speaker remind the group of the areas that he or she needed improvement and ask each to speak for 2 minutes on the topic, focusing on those areas.
2. Have debater critics evaluate them.
3. Congratulate speakers if they improve.

Phase Three: Extreme Speakers (if you have time)

1. Pick a speaker who has a very boring style, and ask him to speak for 1 minute on one of his previous topics in an overly dramatic way. This exercise in overcompensation can be very effective.
2. If they are still not very dramatic, speak loudly to them and say something such as, "Is that as dramatic as you can get?" or "Come on, sound like you really care!"

ADVERSE CONDITIONING:

Procedure:

1. Have each speaker indicate a major problem he has. Ask him to make a 2-minute speech, and every time he makes this mistake have the audience boo, make fun of him, or throw little bits of paper. Keep it mellow and friendly.

OR

2. If when he makes a mistake, have him or her start over again.

Cautions:

- Watch your time.
- Don't allow "critics" to go on too long; get to the point.
- Don't think you always have to comment if the critics have done well.
- Keep the exercise lighthearted.
- Give positive feedback when debaters improve.

Making Arguments

Presenting Arguments

Goals:

- Show debaters the proper structure of a single argument: title, thesis, body, support, impact. You can find this information in the sample instruction at <https://vimeo.com/17454380>
- Help debaters identify their weaknesses and repair them
- Review a broad range of topics, to show in one setting the broad range of hat can be discussed in a debate.

Procedure:

1. Give each debater a different topic.
2. Ask debaters to build one major 3-minute argument for that topic. Caution them not to put the whole topic in one argument.
3. Ask each debater to present her argument.
4. Criticize the presentation, and show where it needs improvement.
5. If you have time, have the class deliver their improved argument.

Cautions:

- Make sure they follow the structure called for in all parts of the argument.
- Keep the process moving so that all can present their initial argument and some can offer their improved version.
- Make sure that their arguments are not just repeating the same ideas over and over again but are indicating the components of the argument.

Argument Type Identification

Goals:

- Group of ten or fewer.
- Acquaint participants with the basic types of arguments: induction, deduction and causal.

- Get participants to compose arguments in these types to make sure they understand them as well as how to build an argument.
- Demonstrate that all arguments have weaknesses and can be criticized.

Procedure:

1. Describe to participants the basic types of arguments, using the instructions at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/argumenttypes.pdf> and give some examples. Have them ask questions if they need to.
2. Assign each participant a different argument type and have him or her compose an argument (one or two sentences) of that type.
3. Have them share their simple argument with the group.
4. Invite them to express any weaknesses in this argument. Ask other group members to suggest some.
5. After one circle, rotate argument types each participant has.

Cautions:

- Do not spend too much time in describing the types of arguments.
- Do not spend too much time on each argument, as the purpose is to give people multiple chances to engage with an argument type.
- Encourage people when their argument is criticized, as that is always going to happen and it is the essence of debating.

Critique of Sample Arguments

Goals:

Help participants identify types of arguments quickly.

Help participants to be able to identify what is wrong with a sample argument.

Demonstrate to participants that all arguments have some weaknesses.

Help participants use common arguments in the processing of building towards a debate that will have more complex arguments.

Procedure:

1. Describe to participants the basic types of arguments, using the instructions at <http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/argumenttypes.pdf> and give some

examples. Have them ask questions if they need to. You may have already done this in the previous exercise.

2. Distribute to them the sample arguments found at http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/sample_arguments.pdf or have a copy for yourself and read the arguments to them.
3. Take 10-12 debaters in a circle and then give them each an argument and ask them “What is wrong with this argument?” You can either do it identifying argument types (easier) or give them a random argument from this page (without them having the page) and ask them to identify the type of argument (more difficult) and then ask them, “What is wrong with this argument?”
4. Help the debater answer the question, or else encourage other debaters to add their opinions.
5. Most arguments have more than one problem, so all group members can potentially be involved with each argument.
6. Try and get as many arguments done by as many debaters as possible in a short period of time.

Cautions:

- Do not spend too much time in describing the types of arguments.
- Do not spend too much time on each argument, as the purpose is to give people multiple chances to engage with an argument type and individual arguments.
- Use your own abilities to come up with faults in an argument that the debaters have missed.
- If you identify debaters who seem challenged by the activity, give them arguments that seem easier.
- Do not let some debaters occupy too much of the conversation. If this might be an issue, have the next person in turn make suggestions at argument

faults instead of opening it to the group. This also makes sure that all participate.

Finding Forms of Support

Goals:

- Help debaters learn about the different forms of support for an argument.
- Help debaters learn how to locate different forms of support on a given topic.
- Help debaters learn about the brainstorming process and how it can help generate ideas.

Procedure:

1. Discuss with a small group the types of forms of support that are available, using the list at http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/forms_of_support.pdf
2. Give them one topic and have them brainstorm types of forms of support they might use for various arguments. Brainstorming is discussed in Chapter Four.
3. Have them discuss the appropriateness of each form of support proposed.
4. Make sure they have found at least one form of support for each category.
5. Have them pick which form of support from your list they think is the best.

Cautions:

- Make sure they arguments they are finding forms of support for are strong arguments. If needed, suggest some arguments to support.
- Make sure they are not confused by the examples of forms of support for different sides in the debate.
- Watch your time and do not linger too long at one step.

Refuting Arguments

Goals:

- Teach debaters how to refute only the important arguments.
- Teach them to use the proper structure.
- Teach them to refute quickly and efficiently.

Procedure:

Note: See guidelines for refutation from <https://vimeo.com/32561736>

1. Refute a case: pick a topic they analyzed previously, and then give them 5 minutes to prepare to refute the argument they originally designed. Have them refute it in a 3-minute speech.
2. After discussion, have them refute it in 2 minutes.

Caution:

- Make sure they hit the best points of the speech they are refuting, not the weakest.
- Make sure they do not spend too much time repeating the argument they are answering.

Types of Debate Topics**Goals:**

- Help debaters understand that all topics are not of the same type.
- Help debaters understand what is required of them by different types of topics.
- Help debaters gain experience in adjusting to topics in ways that help them succeed.

Procedure:

1. Review the basics of different types of topics using the material at http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/types_of_topics.pdf. Mention that debate “topics” can also be called “motions.”
2. After going through the examples for each type and answering questions, assign a topic to each debater. Give them 2-3 minutes to consider it.
3. Urge debaters to not be too “self serving” in their interpretations, but remember that they need to set up a good debate, not run from the major issues.

4. Tell debaters to take into account what they think the major opposition or negative argument will be and to consider this when they interpret the motion.
5. Then have them tell the group what kind of topic it is and how they would interpret it (standard for fact, define term for value, model for policy as well as definitions of other key words).
6. Discuss how some topics might be interpreted as different types, and urging them to pick the type they think they can be successful in supporting. For example, “This House believes that parents should not hit their children” can be debated as policy or value, but would probably be better advocated as a value topic because the particulars of how you would prevent and enforce against parents could be rather daunting.
7. At the end, review what debaters have learned and ask for any other questions.

Cautions:

- Watch the time, and make sure all debaters get a chance to discuss their topic.
- When there are differences of opinion about which type a topic is, ask debaters to discuss which way they would rather advocate it.
- Avoid allowing debaters to put too much detail, especially in a plan or model, as it makes it appear as if they are running away from the major issues.

Building Models

Goals:

- Help debaters learn to identify policy motions that require a model.
- Help debaters build models that have enough detail without narrowing the debate too much.
- Help debaters anticipate major arguments of the opposition.

Procedure:

1. Present some basic ideas about models based on http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/models_and_plans.pdf
2. Go through the example given. Ask debaters what else they would include and anything they would leave out.
3. Give each debater a different motion to build a model for, and allow five minutes for him or her to outline a model according to these guidelines.
4. Have each debater present their model to the group.
5. Ask question, such as – what major opposition arguments do you anticipate and how do you deal with them? Has anything important been left out? Are you trying to narrow the debate too much? Can you do any of this through definition instead of having it in the model?
6. After you ask these questions of the first two debaters, have others ask the questions instead of you.

Cautions:

- Strive for word economy in the way the models are built.
- Make sure to keep the session moving so all will have a chance to contribute.
- Make it clear to them that no model is perfect.

Building Cases**Goals:**

- To teach debaters how to brainstorm complex topics.
- To teach them how to select and organize their best arguments.
- To allow debaters to learn from the topics other debaters are working on.
- To help them find support for their arguments.
- Debaters will have developed a basic understanding of every topic you deal with in this session.
- Help debaters discover good arguments to use on a variety of topics.

Procedure:

Phase One: Build Cases

1. Organize debaters into pairs: one debater is the proposition and the other the opposition. Give each pair a topic and allow them 10 minutes to think of their best three arguments. Have each proposition present her ideas (not as a speech, but in a discussion) for five minutes, including: definitions (if needed), model or plan for action (if needed), two arguments for a first speech, and a third argument for a second speech, which would be appropriate in the WUDC format (the world's most popular). Then have opposition do the same. Even if you are preparing for other formats, three major arguments are good for an exercise like this.

2. Make sure everyone is taking notes about all topics. Comment on the presentations and make concrete suggestions for improvement. You can allow a very debaters to make comments, but don't spend too much time on each topic so everyone has a chance to present his arguments.

Phase Two: Better Cases

1. Give debaters 5 minutes to make adjustments, and then present their basic ideas again, BUT now ask them to include examples and other forms of support they would use.

2. After each presentation, have debaters suggest other examples or forms of support they might have used.

Phase Three: Beauty Contest

If you have time:

1. Nominate cases from two pairs of debaters.

2. Have debaters argue in 1-minute speeches why one is better than the other.

Impossible Topics

Goals:

- Help debaters increase their creativity when dealing with topics that they may be unfamiliar with.
- Help debaters deal with topics that they encounter that seem to be a bit one-sided.
- Help debaters learn to benefit from the creativity of others.

Procedure:

1. Take a group and give each debater a topic from the list at http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/impossible_topics.pdf.
2. Assign to them the opposite side of the one they would prefer.
3. Give them 8 minutes to identify four major arguments they would make.
4. Have them either present the list to the group informally or give a short speech of 4-5 minutes about three of those arguments.
5. Ask debaters to identify the worst of the arguments presented.
6. Ask debaters to suggest better arguments that had been left out.

Cautions:

- Keep the session serious if you can, as frivolity may decrease creativity.
- Watch for time and make sure all get to present their topic and arguments.
- Assign more unusual topics to those who seem more able (or who request a special challenge in this assignment) and the easier topics to those who seem unsure and shy.

Points of Information**Goals:**

- Debaters will develop strong skills in offering points of information
- Debaters will develop strong skills in replying to points of information
- Make debaters search for arguments, and thus points to pose, on a variety of topics. Thus, in one setting with eight debaters everyone will consider the arguments for and against eight different topics.

Procedure:

1. For guidance on teaching points of information (POI), see <https://vimeo.com/48153250>
2. Provide each debater a topic and give the class 7-8 minutes to outline a very brief first proposition or opposition speech.

3. Have a debater speak on his topic, but after one to one and a half minutes pound the table and ask the other members of the group to start offering points of information. All debaters must pose points to the speaker. The speaker **MUST** take all points from a variety of debaters, not just one or two.
4. Evaluate each POI and response: is the question too long or too easy? Are answers too long or weak etc. Feel free to interject these comments during the speech, but do not let others do so.

Cautions:

- Make speeches long enough so that you use all the time and everyone gets to speak. To do this calculate the number of minutes you have in the session, divide that by the number of debaters you want to speak, add some time for preparation for the drill (10 minutes) and comments (very brief, like two minutes per speaker), and then you will know how long to make speeches for this exercise. If they have to speak for nine minutes taking points for eight of them, that is acceptable.
- You can also feel free to offer points, but model good practice and behavior as indicated in the video (<https://vimeo.com/48153250>).
- Always make sure to maintain decorum, no flagging of points (indicating the content of the point when asking to be recognized) or inappropriate behavior.
- Watch the time. Before the first speech is given, use the formula above to calculate how long speeches can be based on the time remaining and the number of debaters in your group

Cross examination

Goals:

- To help debaters determine how to compose and ask effective questions.
- To help debaters learn to diagnose and then properly answer questions.
- To help debaters learn about how to set and avoid traps in cross-examination.

Procedure:

Note: For guidance in teaching cross examination, see

<https://vimeo.com/26720657>

1. Arrange the participants in pairs.
2. Give each pair a different topic and have one person favor the topic and the other oppose it.
3. Ask each participant to create a 3-minute speech in support of his or her side of the topic. Give them 4-5 minutes to do so.
4. Have each pair give their 3-minute speech and then answer questions from the assembled group for 4 minutes.
5. Comment on good and bad efforts at questions and answers.

Cautions:

- Watch the time to ensure everyone has an opportunity to take part.
- Avoid being too critical of newer participants.
- Praise strong efforts by any individual.

Specific Training Activities

These training activities are a bit more advanced but can be introduced to people after they have been in at least one debate.

Locating Principles**Goals:**

- To discover what a principle is.
- To learn how to express principles properly
- To learn how to use principle to build arguments and tram lines.

Procedures:

Note: For background on this issue, see the lecture at <https://vimeo.com/7929633>

1. Explain that a principle is a general maxim that most people would accept and that the judges will respond to with, “yes.” A principle needs to be phrased generally but should have a clear application to the topic.
2. Divide the group up into pairs, one proposition, and one opposition.
3. Provide each pair a topic and give them 20 seconds to think of the principle for their side and integrate it into a one-sentence team line (the general position that your team will favor reduced to a simple sentence).
4. Ask each team to discuss their analysis. Help them word the principle and suggest alternatives.
5. Tell all participants to take notes on the topics and principles.

Cautions:

- Don't spend too much time on one topic.
- Focus on how participants phrase their principle; make sure it is a complete thought, a snappy phrase (short, to the point and using lively language), and a statement most would agree with.
- Contrast the two opposing principles on one topic and ask the group which side is more likely to win.

Mini Debates of Various Sizes

Goals:

- To work on general debate skills but save time. Debaters often learn as much from a mini-debate as from a full debate.
- To work with a flexible number of people.

Procedures:

1. Divide participants into teams and sides – one on one, two on two, three on three, four on four.
2. Give each mini-debate a different topic and tell them that they have 15 minutes to prepare arguments (or not if you are using a prepared topic). Ask them to focus on

an entire range of issues or on just one or two central issues in speeches that take up half the time allotted in the debate format you are working on.

3. Have the debate using shorter speeches (perhaps four minutes, less if there are more than four people in the debate).

4. Critique each speech or each debate

Cautions:

- Make sure the debaters focus on important arguments and develop them well, not just give a larger number of arguments explained in a more shallow fashion.
- Encourage participants to stay after the event and give their speech again.

Long Table Debates

Goals:

- Get many people involved in one debate.
- Teach participants how to refute an argument.
- Teach participants how to develop new and different arguments.

Procedure:

1. Divide the group into two sides, “Yes” and “No” and arrange their desks or chairs in two rows facing each other.
2. Explain that the first speaker has three minutes to present an argument for “Yes.” Each following speaker (alternating between “Yes” and “No”) gives a three-minute speech in which they refute the argument just made by the other side and present a new argument supporting their side.
3. After each speech, evaluate the refutation and whether the argument was actually new.
4. After the last speech, applaud the participants.

Cautions:

- Pick a common issue around which many arguments have been presented so that the exercise is not too challenging.
- Be fairly strict about what is and is not a new argument.
- Don't withhold your praise. Congratulate people even if they do only part of the exercise well. Always highlight the positive.

Judging

Goals:

- To help debaters understand how debates are judged.
- To help debaters prepare to be judges.

Procedure:

1. Ask debaters to serve as judges for practice debates. Use the most experienced debaters, but not the same ones all the time.
2. Tell them they need to become the kind of judges that they want to see judging them when they debate,
3. Have them watch and then critique the debate.
4. Ask those who were judged to evaluate the critique given.
5. Following the debate, have them give you a short written list of what they learned from judging that will make them a better debater.

Cautions:

- Encourage new judges to keep their comments short and balanced between positive and negative.
- Make sure that critiques contain constructive comments and not personal criticisms.
- Make sure each debater judge gets equal opportunity to comment on the debate.

Debate Topic Construction

Goals:

- Learn to build topics.
- Learn how to analyze topics and their components.
- Learn how to understand what those who compose topics might be thinking.

Procedure:

Note: For background on topic development see Snider & Schnurer (79-91).

http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Snider_SchnurerMany_Sides_2nd_ed.pdf

1. Discuss what debaters should keep in mind when building topics. Remind them that topics should be interesting, balanced, support change, be worded in an elegant, neutral fashion, not be too broad, and should have one central idea.
2. Divide participants into pairs give each pair an area of contemporary controversy (in the news). Have them draft at least two topics from this controversy.
3. Ask each pair to present their topics to the group, and critique them based on the criteria for topic building given earlier.
4. Ask the other participants which of these topics they would most want to debate if they did not know what side they would be on.

Cautions:

- Watch carefully which criteria are followed and which are not.
- Have something good and something critical to day about each topic.
- Point out when two topics from the same controversy area are too similar.

Tournament Tabulation

Goal:

- To help debaters understand how debate tournaments are tabulated.
- To learn the appropriate software available for tournament tabulation.
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Procedure:

1. Have those designated to do the tabulation run a practice tournament on the software selected so that problems can be seen in advance. Major tabulation programs can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/software.html> . The recommended software packages for tournament tabulation include:

- TRPC for PC by Rich Edwards of Baylor University, good for debate formats with from one to three members per team, available at: https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Richard_Edwards/www/Welcome.html
- Tournaman for PC, from the Berlin Debating Union, a very solid basic program for the four-team World Universities Debate Championship format, available at: <http://tournaman.wikidot.com/> .

2. Ask them to report on successes and challenges in this simulation.

Caution:

Never use a tabulation program at a tournament unless you have learned how to use it previously, by running a make-believe tournament if needed.

World Universities Debate Championship Format Exercises

This format, usually called “WUDC,” “Worlds” or even “BP (British Parliamentary),” is the most popular debate format in the world, and it is the one that the vast majority of universities use. There are reasons for this:

1. It is very easy to do the first time.
2. It has a very high ceiling, in other words it is very challenging to do it very, very well.
3. It puts eight debaters in one room for a debate.
4. It is dynamic and audiences really seem to appreciate it.
5. It is the standard format for international competition at the university level.

For a very brief explanation, see [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ Berlin Briefing 3 - The British Parliamentary Format \(for Novices\).pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Berlin%20Briefing%203%20The%20British%20Parliamentary%20Format%20(for%20Novices).pdf) .

Here are some exercises that are specific to this format.

WUDC – Second Team Drills

Goals:

- Help debaters understand that the second team in a WUDC debate must advance the argumentation, not just repeat the same points.
- Help debaters to think creatively about a wide variety of arguments during preparation.
- Help debaters adapt to the argumentative choices of a first team.

Procedure:

1. Divide the debaters up into teams of two. Give each of them the **topic only** from the sheet at http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/second_team_drills.pdf.
2. Have all debaters take notes on all motions in their training manual.
3. Give them ten minutes to prepare. Have them develop at least five or six major arguments in a list.
4. Then, tell each team what the first team ahead of them has done, from the list above.
5. Give them five minutes to prepare what their new arguments will be.
6. If the group is smaller, have them give a five minute speech where they present the new argument(s). If a larger group, have them present what their new argument(s) will be to the group in an abbreviated form.
7. Engage the group in analysis and criticism of the choices they have made and whether these choices are sufficient to gain them the victory in the debate.

Cautions:

- Make sure that the arguments that they come up with are either new or substantially help to advance the debate.
- Watch the time to make sure everyone gets a chance to share his or her choices.
- If debaters do not come up with critical analysis of the choices made, do so yourself in your role as trainer.

WUDC: Surprise with Topics

Goals:

- Help debaters anticipate unusual moves by affirmative/proposition teams.
- Help debaters adjust to new situations quickly during the debate.
- Help debaters learn to see different potential approaches to topics/motions.

Procedure:

1. Divide debaters into two-person teams.
2. Give each team a topic from the sheet
http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/surprise_with_motions.pdf
3. Give them ten minutes to work out a first negative/opposition strategy to the motion.
4. Make sure debaters take complete notes in their Training Manual book.
5. Reveal to them the “surprise” that the first affirmative/proposition team has unveiled as their strategy.
6. Give each team five minutes to regroup and decide what their major arguments as first negative/opposition will be. They may not dispute the definition.
7. Have each team present their new strategy. Encourage comment and criticism from others as well as other options they might have taken.

Cautions:

- Do not tell them that this exercise is called “surprise.”
- Do not allow the teams to frame major definitional disputes, and require them to adapt to the surprise.
- Encourage other teams to make suggestions, and you should feel free to do so yourself.
- Watch your time to make sure all get a chance to participate.

WUDC: Second Team Videos

Goals:

Help debaters improve by making them debate against excellent teams.

Help debaters develop skills at advancing the debate as a second team.

Allow them to see how other teams would have performed in their place.

Procedure:

1. Divide debaters into two teams of two. One second affirmative/proposition and the other second negative/opposition. For more than four debaters situate them as similar two teams in other rooms with access to the Internet and at least a laptop computer.
2. Have them prepare for the motion utilized in one of the following debates: This House would show the full horrors of war (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/debate-wudc-finals-from-koc-worlds-2010.html>), or This House would invade Zimbabwe (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/01/debate-wudc-invade-zimbabwe-wudc-2012.html>), or This House would pay reparations for slavery (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/debate-wudc-reparations-for-slavery.html>) or other excellent debates you find online, such as at <http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>).
3. Have the two teams watch the first half of the debate. They can take notes and work on their arguments, but obviously, no points of information can be offered.
4. After the first four speeches, the two teams join the debate as both second teams and conduct the debate as normally.
5. After the debate, have the teams watch what the second two teams did in the actual debate, taking notes and noticing differences.
6. Have the debaters discuss their choices and their speeches versus those in the actual debate.

Cautions:

This exercise will take longer than the usual one hour, and may take up to two hours.

This exercise should be done with more experienced debaters, as they will have to critique themselves.

Make sure that the Internet connection and the laptops work well. If there are problems, you can download the original video earlier from the link at the site of the original video above.

WUDC: Refutation against Superstars

Goals:

- Help debaters learn various methods for refutation.
- Help debaters refine the timing refutation sections of speeches.
- Help debaters gain experience refuting very good teams.

Procedure:

1. Debaters will speak as individuals in this exercise.
2. Give the debaters a motion from one of the debates below and have them think of major affirmative/proposition arguments and how they would refute them.
3. Have all debaters take notes on all speeches in their training manual booklet.
4. Have the debaters watch the first affirmative/proposition speech from a video of a debate such as: This House would show the full horrors of war (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/debate-wudc-finals-from-koc-worlds-2010.html>), or This House would invade Zimbabwe (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/01/debate-wudc-invade-zimbabwe-wudc-2012.html>), or This House would pay reparations for slavery (<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2011/02/debate-wudc-reparations-for-slavery.html>) or other excellent debates you find online, such as at <http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>).
5. Have each debater give a three minute speech where they refute the major points made by the team they just heard speak.
6. After each speech have then give a two-minute talk about their strategy, such as points they handled and point they ignored, broader or narrower refutation, as well as their choice of words.

7. After each debater has spoken, have a discussion about which refutation was the best and why. Note the different tactics used by the different speakers.
8. If time allows, have the debaters give their refutation speech again with improvements.

Cautions:

- Tell the debaters NOT to copy ideas and techniques from previous speakers, as that will decrease the benefit of the exercise.
- Watch for time to make sure everyone can contribute.
- Intervene as necessary in your role as trainer to indicate strategies you thought were best, but always listen to the ideas of the debaters as well.

Conclusion

Some of the most exciting events that take place in your organization are these training exercises. These events help you learn and build skills, but they also build interpersonal relationships, identification with the organization as well as a will to succeed in the long run. After people learn from these exercise, they become far more powerful advocates and recruiters for your organization.

Resources

Debate Motions from Around the World, Debate Motion Central,

<http://debatemotioncentral.blogspot.com/> and

<http://debate.uvm.edu/debatemotioncentral/index.html>

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Minnesota Debate Teachers Association, Teaching debate

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<http://debatevideoblog.blogspot.com/2012/08/lecture-general-forms-of-support-for.html>

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