**Debates & Debating**

A debate is a formal discussion or argument between two teams about a given topic. The positions and topics are usually assigned at random. The winning team is the one that delivers the most convincing arguments in the most convincing way. It’s not about who’s right or wrong, or what you personally think about the topic – it’s an exercise in using effective persuasive language and speaking techniques.

In a debate, the topic being discussed is called the **motion**. This is usually a controversial statement or question with no clear or correct answer. There are two teams, each with three members. The team that argues FOR (in favour of) the motion is called **affirmative** or **proposition**. The team that argues against (opposed to) the motion is called **negative** or **opposition**.

The members of the teams deliver their speeches in a very specific order and format. Each speaks for exactly three minutes.

1. **The First Affirmative Speaker**

Introduces the debate, defines the topic & any key terms, introduces their team line and team split, and makes two main points in favour of the topic.

1. **The First Negative Speaker**

Challenges or accepts the affirmative’s definition of the topic, rebuts their two points, introduces their team line and team split, and makes two main points against the topic.

1. **The Second Affirmative Speaker**

Rebuts points made by first negative speaker and makes another two points in favour of the topic.

1. **The Second Negative Speaker**

Rebuts the points made by the second affirmative speaker and makes another two points against the topic.

1. **The Third Affirmative Speaker**

Rebuts the points made by second negative speaker, summarises the debate so far and explains why their side’s arguments are more convincing. Does not bring up any new points

1. **The Third Negative Speaker**

Summarises the whole debate and explains why their arguments are more convincing. Does not bring up any new points but can rebut the opposition’s arguments and/or counter any of their previous rebuttals

**Rebuttal**

Rebuttal is the most difficult part of debate. It involves thinking on your feet and formulating a response in a very short time. You won’t know what the opponent’s points are beforehand – while they are speaking, you must LISTEN carefully, write down their points, and come up with reasons why they are either untrue or unimportant. You can pass notes with your team for ideas for rebuttal, but are not allowed to discuss it verbally, even in a whisper.

The three steps for rebuttal are:

1. State what they said
2. Say why it’s wrong
3. Say why your point is better

Always clearly state each point before rebutting it – e.g. “The opposition has claimed that students spend too much time on technology. But we feel that this is wrong because…”