



Griffith College Dublin

**Legal Debating
Competition 2018**

Information Booklet

The Annual Griffith College Schools Legal Debating Competition takes place on Wednesday 21st March 2018 at the Griffith College campus on the South Circular Road, Dublin 8.

Entry Requirements

- To partake in the Legal Debating Competition, you will need to submit a general essay on the motion;

“The House believes reality television does more harm than good.”

- Essays should be 1,500 words in length.
- Essays should be submitted no later than 5pm on 14th February 2018.
- Eight teams will be shortlisted to attend on 21st March 2018.
- Essays should be accompanied by a cover letter confirming school details, name of team members, contact details (teacher etc.)
- The eight teams shortlisted will be contacted no later than 25th February 2018
- Successful teams will be at this time be assigned to either the proposition or opposition of the motion.

Competition Guidelines

- The teams will consist of 4 students where each student will speak for between 3 - 5 minutes to a maximum of 15 minutes per team.
- There will be a knock from the time-keeper at the end of 1 minute and the end of 4 minutes so students can keep track of timing, followed by a double-knock at 5 minutes.
- Students will be penalised in points for continuing after 5 minutes.
- Points of information are allowed but only between the first knock at 1 minute and the second knock at 4 minutes so the first minute and the last minute of a speech cannot be interrupted.
- The proposition will start the debate with the first speaker (usually the captain) speaking first, followed by the opposition captain, alternating until all 4 team-mates on each side have spoken.
- There is no specific time-allocation for rebuttal so it should be integrated into speeches.
- Judges do not tend to ask questions but are permitted to do so.

The Final

- The teams that reach the final will be informed before lunch.
- The final two teams will have one hour to prepare their debate, the motion being

“This House believes that the Gardai should be armed.”

- The opposition and proposition will be decided on the day.

- Members of the Griffith College Debating Society will be available to assist the final two teams.
- The rules for the final are similar to those of the initial rounds.

All submissions and queries can be sent to law@griffith.ie .

Please note, supporters from your school are welcome to attend this event and we would ask you to contact us in advance to confirm the number of supporters attending.

CONTENTS

- 1. How to prepare a speech**
- 2. How debates are judged**
- 3. Delivering a speech**
- 4. Engaging in a debate**
- 5. Common problems and how to resolve them**

1. HOW TO PREPARE A SPEECH

1. You receive the motion:

- Read the motion. Ascertain what it is about. A simple way to determine whether or not you understand the motion is to ask yourself if you can explain why the debate is happening.
- Read around the motion. If the motion is topical, it has probably received media attention recently. Investigate what has been written and said about the topic.

2. Generate ideas:

- Talk to your teachers, parents and friends. Ask them about the motion.
- Try to think about the following:
 - a) Stakeholders - who does the motion affect? How does it affect them? Does it affect some individuals or groups more than others?
 - b) Policies - is the motion asking you to debate a policy? If it is, consider the impact of this policy on different stakeholders. Ask yourself who is implementing the policy. If it is the government for instance, ask whether the government has the right to enact and implement such a policy. Who and/or what should the government prioritize?
 - c) Concepts - the motion might not be asking you to talk about a policy, but rather, to look at an idea or philosophical concept.

3. Select the ideas you want to develop into points:

- If you are speaking early on in the debate, then focus on the most basic points. This allows you to claim these points as your own.
- If you are later on in the debate, try to think a little more outside of the box. If you use the same arguments as those who came before you, and do not add substantially to them, it is unlikely that you will get much credit for them. Instead, take the more original ideas which you have generated and develop these instead.
- If you are in a team, then you will need to divide the points between you.

4. **Develop your ideas:**

- Once you have selected your best ideas, you should develop them. This can be difficult and requires considerable thought. However, a useful model for development exists, and is encapsulated by the acronym 'S.E.I.'.

a) S = State

What are you seeking to prove? Can you think of a simple way of expressing the basic idea that you want the people listening to your speech to take away from your argument?

b) E= Explain

This may be the most important part of the development process. In short, you need to explain why your statement is true. What you need to explain depends on the argument you are making. You should aim to have satisfied yourself by the end of this process that you have shown that your claim is true by showing how it could be successful in the "real world", or why it is important.

Sometimes, speakers embark on this part of the process by posing a series of questions and answering them. If you can think of new answers which you have not already generated, then you may have found a new angle of analysis.

c) I = Illustrate

Illustrate your claim with examples. This is really important because real world impacts of an idea can strengthen your persuasiveness by giving those listening to you something to relate to.

5. **Fitting it all together:**

- Once you have all of the work done, all you need to do is put it all together. Think of a structure for your speech. Your most important points should come first and less important or shorter points should come later.
- Make sure to time your speech and know how long each individual section takes. This will allow you to make decisions about cutting material if necessary. Also remember to leave time for rebuttal.

6. **Think about what the other side will say:**

- Before the debate, think about what the other side will say. This will help you prepare for rebuttal - you can formulate answers to opponent's questions and arguments in advance of the debate, rather than having to do so on the spot.

2. HOW DEBATES ARE JUDGED

Debates are judged comparatively. When the judges deliberate, they discuss your contribution as a team and/or as an individual compared to other teams and speakers in the debate. So, how are your contributions assessed?

1. Development of arguments:

- Arguments start with statements. Statements must then be developed. Developing your ideas simply means analysing them and explaining why they are true. As outlined above, it is helpful to ask yourself a series of questions about the statement which you are making. For instance, if you claim that the death penalty is wrong because killing is always wrong, then you need to explain why killing is always wrong.

2. Delivery of speech:

- Judges will also reward the manner in which you deliver your speech. This criterion usually takes into account your speaking style and the manner in which you express the arguments you are relying on. Some speakers are funny and light-hearted, others are passionate and eloquent. Both of these can be convincing, but need to be founded on persuasive concrete arguments. Your aim should be to find the right balance between style and substance.

3

3. Research:

- Where you have time to prepare your speech, the research you have done will be taken into account. Try to use reputable sources. Similarly, try to use your research to formulate persuasive arguments. Do not treat your research as an argument in itself – rather, it should inform and strengthen points you will be making in the debate.

3. DELIVERING A SPEECH

1. Reading:

- Try not to rely too heavily on notes you have written. If you can, be familiar with your speech well in advance of the debate. This will allow you to make eye contact with the judges and the audience and makes you appear more confident.

2. Rhetoric:

- The language you use is important. When you have had time to prepare your speech, you should focus on polishing your speech. This might involve clever turns of phrase or interesting literary flourishes. It can be helpful for you to talk to a teacher or somebody who is good with English to help you determine what works and what does not. A polished speech goes down very well with the judges who will appreciate the effort you have put into it.

3. How is style assessed?

- Usually, the delivery of the speech and the content of the speech are considered together. The ideal speaker possesses a combination of proficiency in both of these aspects. It is sometimes best to think of the stylistic delivery of a speech as being a way to make your concrete arguments more persuasive. Therefore, it is definitely something to take into consideration when writing your speech.

4. ENGAGING IN A DEBATE

1. Why is debating different from public speaking?

- In public speaking, you are tasked with presenting a particular piece to an audience, usually in isolation and without reference to the opinions of anyone else who may be presenting alongside you.
- In debating, you are always defending something. The key difference between debating and public speaking is that you are trying to prove why you are right and other people are wrong. Therefore, it is important not only to acknowledge the contributions from other people in a debate, but also to show why you have been more persuasive.

2. Rebuttal

- Rebuttal is offered during your own speech. The aim of rebuttal is to deal with arguments which have already been offered by other speakers in the debate and answer them. Rebuttal may be incorporated into your speech or presented at the start of your speech.
- When formulating rebuttal, make sure to engage with the bigger ideas of other speakers. Do not spend too much time pointing out small problems with their arguments when there may be more important arguments to tackle.

5. COMMON PROBLEMS AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM

1. Lack of Analysis:

- Often arguments are asserted. In basic terms, this means that arguments are underdeveloped and do not receive as much credit as they should.
- Solution: Develop your arguments as much as possible and support with examples when applicable. The acronym S.E.I. (as explained earlier) serves as a useful way of thinking about the development of your arguments.

2. Picking the wrong points:

- Sometimes the first argument you think of is probably not the strongest argument you can make. Arguments which may be valid but difficult to defend or lack potential for development are usually arguments which should be reconsidered when deciding which points to use.
- Solution: Try to come up with multiple ideas before you choose the final ones you wish to rely on.

3. Relying too heavily on statistics:

- It has been noted in recent years by judges of schools competitions that statistics are used as arguments.
- Solution: Continue to conduct research which uncovers useful statistics, but do try and interpret and explain the statistics you find. Statistics in and of themselves do not constitute arguments.

4. Timing:

- Often: The most important or newest arguments in a speech come out in the last minutes of the speech and as a result are underdeveloped.
- Solution: When preparing your speech, place your new and important material first. This will require you to sit down and make decisions about the priority of your points, and deliberately place your best material early in your speech.

