

Preparing for your debate



Student Tips

- **TIME:** Each speaker has 4 minutes and 30 seconds to speak. Make sure you speak for no less than 4 minutes (or you will look like you didn't prepare well), and for no more than 4 minutes and 30 seconds (or you will lose some of your hard-earned marks in time penalties).
- **RESEARCH:** Concern provides a list of sources and web links for each motion in the league phase which can be a starting point for your research. Resources are available on our website here <https://www.concern.net/schools-and-youth/debates/materials>. But you can and should find other reputable sources too.



Research can take many forms:

- Surveys within your school, community, family or friends. Useful for motions that address our responsibilities and attitudes.
- Books, encyclopedia, newspapers, journals, periodicals and magazines can be a great source of statistics and quotations.
- Carrying out interviews with politicians, ambassadors, councillors, local business people or teachers.
- Documentaries, current affairs and news programmes can contain some really strong information and statistics.
- Contacting NGOs, government departments
- Searching websites such as www.developmenteducation.ie www.globalissues.org www.newint.org www.bbc.co.uk/news and of course www.concern.net.
- Podcasts, informative videos and other multimedia can all be found in abundance on the internet too.
- **SOURCES:** Remember to quote sources for your statistics and facts!

- **STRUCTURE:** If you have a team line, use it sparingly and to emphasise your points. One handy little rule for structuring your speech is the 'Rule of Three':
 1. Say what you are going to say ~ Introduction
 2. Say it ~ Main Body (your proof)
 3. Remind us of what you have said ~ Conclusion (sum up)

- **HUMOUR:** Remember to use your wit! Humour really livens up a debate.

- **ANTICIPATE:** Remember to have additional, relevant information and statistics that might be used for rebuttal during the debate. Leave time for refutation and rebuttal when finalising your speech. Try to predict what the other team will say and keep some statistics that could be used to counteract their arguments. **Remember if you do not include Refutation & Rebuttal you will not receive any points in this category from the adjudicators!**



Refer to our [Refutation & Rebuttal Guide](#) for more tips on how to counter your opposing team's arguments.

- **PRACTISE:** Practise your speeches in front of the mirror; using a video camera; in front of parents and your classes. The more comfortable and confident you are of the points you are making, the easier it will be to convince others – especially the adjudicators.
- See our [Sample Speech](#) resource to view an example of how to format and structure your speech.



During the debate:

- **PROPS:** Props are not permitted for use during the Concern Debates Programme.
- **PREPARATION:** All research must be done in advance of the debate. It is not permitted for your team to use laptops, iPads or mobile phones to continue research once the debate has begun.
- **BE CONFIDENT:** Use your notes as little as possible. Pace yourself, do not speak too fast. Enjoy yourself and be passionate about the subject. Debaters should use body language, eye contact and vary their tone to keep the audience captivated.
- **ACTIVE LISTENING:** Throughout the debate you and your entire team should be listening out for points to refute and rebut the other team's arguments.
- **TEAMWORK:** Debaters need to show that they worked as a team in preparing for the debate. It should be obvious to the adjudicators how you divided up the subject. Debaters should also be familiar with each other's speeches, share research and useful statistics and refer to your team mate's speeches if relevant. Do not be afraid of passing notes to each other (quietly!) during the debate – this will show that you are working together to come up with points of Refutation or Rebuttal.
- **CONCERN DEBATES ETHOS:** All debaters must ensure they treat their opposing debaters with courtesy and respect. Sarcasm, offensive language and any form of disrespect towards other debaters will not be tolerated, and may impact your school's chances of participating in the Concern Debates programme in future years.



Captain's Duties:

Opening Speech:

The proposing captain is marked on their definition of the motion and outlining the team's arguments. The captain of the opposing team is marked for responding to the motion defined by the proposition and outlining their team's arguments.

Closing Speech:

Each captain is marked on their summation of their team's arguments and rebuttals, and refutation or rebuttal of their own. No new material should be introduced in the summation, even if it shows brilliant research or understanding! While captains can include their team mates' rebuttals in their summations, this will only give them marks under the summary category of the marking section. To receive points in the refutation and rebuttal category the captain must introduce further new Refutation and Rebuttal.

