



DEBATES

(from Rostrum WA Informer)

The method of adjudication for debates depends on the conditions of competition. The most common approach adopted by the Debating Union which is affiliated with the Australian Debating federation, is summarised thus;

1. Each speaker is allowed absolute freedom in his method of presentation of argument, but the last negative speaker must not introduce any new matter;
2. All relevant argument is to be accepted unless rebutted by opposing speakers;
3. Each speaker should attack the opposition arguments as well as consolidating his team's case, but the last speaker on is mainly responsible for rebuttal and summing up;
4. Number three affirmative speaker may introduce limited fresh matter but number three negative must not;
5. Each speaker should finish as nearly as possible on the final bell. (each speaker normally speaks for twelve minutes with a warning bell at ten minutes.); and
6. Maximum marks that may be awarded to each speaker are as follows.

MATTER:	Sound argument reinforced by examples and illustration	40
MANNER:	Sound (volume, clarity, variety, audience control), appearance, stance, facial expression, gesture.	40
METHOD:	Architecture of speech, fulfilment of function and team work.	<u>20</u>
TOTAL		100

Again the adjudicator can use a *working sheet* approach, designing his analysis to suit the circumstances and type of competition.

GENERAL APPROACH.

The essence of a debate is argument, on the assumption that there are two sides, clearly definable, to every question. It may be regarded as a verbal battle where strategy, tactics and team work are important and the purpose of each speaker is to convince the man-in-the-street that a particular viewpoint should be supported. For the period of the debate the speaker becomes the equivalent of a professional advocate, irrespective of his own beliefs.

DEFINITION AND RELEVANCE

All debating teams and adjudicators are plagued by the problem of definition. This definition should set the terms of reference or the limits within which the case is to be argued. Unfortunately recourse to dictionaries and isolated examination of words in the title lead some competitors and the choice of meaning which "side tracks" the issue.

So the adjudicator must make himself familiar with the meaning of the words. (the Concise Oxford is the normal authority) and with the international, national or social context of the ideas expressed. He then judges for himself the reasonableness of the approach adopted by the speakers, relevance of the arguments advanced, and the extent to which the case is proved or disproved. One standing rule is that incorrect facts or arguments which are not rebutted by the opposing team are taken as correct for the purpose of the debate.

TEAMWORK

Another important feature subject to careful analysis by the adjudicator is teamwork. The debate is between two teams and not a competition to select the best speaker. this point is easily overlooked, so the speeches for each team should be complimentary to each other, leading to the presentation of a total case, by argument and rebuttal for each side of the case. Individual speeches must be assessed in this context.

ETIQUETTE

Etiquette is important; failure to observe the usual courtesies leads to loss of marks. Some of the more important items are:-

- (a) The chairman is in charge of the meeting and should be addressed at the opening of the speech and, as appropriate during the speech. At no time should the debater speak directly to a member of the opposing team.
- (b) Personal remarks -"attack the man"- about members of the opposing team are not allowed.
- (c) Members of teams should not be referred to by name. Use rather "The leader of the negative, the second speaker for the negative" or simply "the negative team", "the Government" or other appropriate mode of reference.
- (d) The individual speaker subordinating himself to membership of his team, says " we of the Government affirm", " I believe", "I submit" etc.

METHOD

One of the best analyses of the teamwork approach to debating, which can be used as the basis of marking, is that circulated by the New South Wales Debating Societies Union. Assuming twelve minute speeches the distribution of responsibilities is given as follows:-

LEADER OF THE AFFIRMATIVE

- Introduction: Include definition or interpretation of subject.
- Development : Outline case - either by theme or division of subject under headings for each speaker. Develop appropriate part of case.
- Summarise or recapitulate.
- Conclusion or peroration.

LEADER OF THE NEGATIVE

- Introduction: Prepared opening or attack on affirmative case; accept or reject affirmative definition (no rejection is acceptance).
- Development: Attack main arguments of affirmative. Outline case for side. Develop own argument.
- Summarise or recapitulate.
- Conclusion or peroration.

SECOND AFFIRMATIVE

- Introduction: Prepared opening or reaffirm definition or attack negative argument.
- Development: Attack main points advanced by leader of negative. Support own leader (if necessary). Develop own part of case as advanced by leader (most important).
- Summarise or recapitulate.
- Conclusion or peroration.

SECOND NEGATIVE

- Introduction: Prepared opening or attack arguments of affirmative.
- Development: Attack main arguments of second affirmative and maybe the leader of the affirmative. Develop own case as outlined by leader.
- Summarise or recapitulate.
- Conclusion or peroration.

THIRD AFFIRMATIVE

- Introduction: Prepared opening or attack negative case.
- Development: Attack in detail arguments of second negative and first negative. Develop own case as outlined by leader.
- Summarise both cases.
- Conclusion or peroration: Appeal for support for argument.

THIRD NEGATIVE

- Introduction: Prepared opening or direct attack on affirmative case.
- Development: Attack arguments of affirmative case in reverse order. Contrast negative and affirmative cases.
- Summarise or recapitulate.
- Peroration: Appeal for support of argument.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Rostrum critics should not hesitate to gain experience as adjudicators, both in their own interests and in the interests of a high standard of Rostrum criticism.

Attempt to measure or to mark lead to more precise thinking and a balanced assessment of excellence. So the critic learns to see public speaking in a wider perspective and develops a much better appreciation of the points which should be emphasised during club criticism. In short, he develops balanced judgement.