

DEBATE TERMS AND IMPORTANT THINGS:
CROSS-EXAMINATION STYLE

BY: NATAŠA MIĆOVIĆ
UNIVERSITY HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL
Vancouver, BC
September 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Foreword.....	3
Resolution.....	3
Proposition/Affirmative.....	3
Opposition/Negative.....	3
First Speaker.....	3
Second Speaker.....	4
How to Start.....	4
Hook.....	4
Defining the Terms.....	5
Signposting.....	5
Points/Argument.....	6
Acronyms- S.P.E.R.M.....	7
Acronyms- S.E.X.Y.....	7
Cross-Examination.....	7
Question Line.....	7
Rebutal.....	8
4 Kinds of Evidence.....	8
Closing/Summary Speech.....	10
How to End.....	10
Always Use “We”	10
Judges the Judges.....	10

FOREWORD: Hey guys! These are some of the things that have really helped me in debate. They are the important terms. I've written the definitions to the best of my ability. I hope that you guys understand everything, but if you don't feel free to ask me. These are the things you need to know. I know that it's really long, but I slaved over this manual this weekend. Most of the stuff is basic. Good luck to you on all your future debates! If you ever get lost, just remember that debate is like an essay, the format is very similar. If I've missed anything, let me know. I might just publish this one day, as the "GREAT DEBATER'S HANDBOOK!"

THE RESOLUTION: Usually starts with "Be It Resolved That (BIRT)," "This House Believes That (THBT)," "This House Would (THW)." It is the topic that you'll be debating.

E.G. This House Would Decriminalize Cannabis

PROPOSITION/AFFIRMATIVE: The team that is arguing for the resolution. There is a first speaker and a second speaker. The first speaker has two 4 minute speeches, the second speaker has one 7 minute speech. Both speakers will also cross-examine a speaker from the other team for 2 or 3 minutes.

Yes! Cannabis should be decriminalized!

OPPOSITION/NEGATIVE: The team that is arguing against the resolution. There is a first speaker and a second speaker. The first speaker has two 4 minute speeches, the second speaker has one 7 minute speech. Both speakers will also cross-examine a speaker from the other team for 2 or 3 minutes.

No! Cannabis should NOT be decriminalized!

FIRST SPEAKER: The first speaker gives a 4 minute opening speech, and a 4 minute closing/summary speech. They'll have a cross-examination period in between, which lasts 2 or 3 minutes. They introduce the points, briefly elaborate on one in the opening speech, and then prove why their team is right in the closing speech by providing a summary of the debate.

SECOND SPEAKER: The second speaker is the elaborator, their job is to elaborate on the points in the second speech, bring in facts and solidify all the statements made by their team. They also should use some time to rebut some statements from the other team during their speech. They will also have a cross-examination period of 2 or 3 minutes.

HOW TO START: The usual way to start a debate and to introduce yourself to the debate in a fancy way is a simple string of memorized words. Both the first and second speakers can use a variation of this. The example, however, is more suited to the first speaker. Through your time in debate you'll find that a lot of debaters like to start their debates like this:

Ladies and Gentlemen, honourable judges, worthy opponents and esteemed colleague(s). We are gathered here today to debate the resolution of: THW decriminalize cannabis. We on side proposition/opposition firmly believe that the resolution must and will stand/fall. There are 3 main points that my colleague and I will be discussing during our speeches. Firstly, {INSERT YOUR FIRST POINT HERE}, which I will elaborate on. Secondly, {INSERT YOUR SECOND POINT HERE}, which my partner will elaborate on. And lastly, {INSERT YOUR THRID POINT HERE}, which my partner will also be elaborating on.

HOOK: A hook is a fairly effective way to start a debate. It's a go to option for novices and experienced debaters alike. This is the first speaker of both sides job in the first speech. The second speaker pretty much never uses a hook, nor does the first speaker in his/her closing speech. A hook is meant to entice the people to listen and care about your debate. It's usually really cheesy, but it works. These are the hooks I used last year for a Child Labour debate:

PROPOSITION: *Imagine! A world of equality, one in which there is no such thing as child labour. One in which no certain country is superior to it's neighbouring nation. One in which no one human is better than his fellow man. Ladies and Gentleman, honorable judges, worthy opponents and esteemed colleauges, such a world is not out of reach. It can be achieved; how? Simple: by allowing child labour in developing nations, and allowing them to develop to the extent of Canada, or any other developed country.*

OPPOSITION: *Imagine! 250 million more children in school, at home, not being abused and not being exploited. Having one of the most important things a child could have: a childhood. It's not impossible, all we have to*

do is abolish child labour.

OR:

Imagine waking up after just 6 measly hours of sleep, walking miles to your job, just so that you can be abused and exploited. Now imagine 250 million children -some as young as 4 years- going through that suffering each and every day!

DEFINING THE TERMS: This is the first thing you do in your speech as first speaker of the proposition. However, if you fail to do it, it becomes the first speaker of the opposition's job. This is where you take the words in the resolution and define their meaning.

NOTE: YOU CANNOT DEFINE THE TERMS SO THAT THE DEBATE BECOMES ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE OTHER SIDE TO DEBATE. THAT IS CALLED "SQUIRRELLING," IF THE OTHER TEAM CALLS YOU OUT FOR IT, YOU LOSE POINTS. IF JUDGE NOTICES YOU DOING THAT THEY CAN REALLY MESS UP YOUR SCORE. DEFINE THE TERMS FAIRLY, OR SLIGHTLY AND SUBTLELY TO BENEFIT YOU. NEVER GO TOO FAR WITH HELPING YOURSELF.

We, the proposition, would like to clarify some of the confusing major terms in the resolution before we get into our arguments. We define "This House" as the Federal Government of Canada. We define decriminalizing as not being legal, but not being a law enforcement priority. This is for recreational marijuana use. This would only apply for small amounts, like 2 ounces or less. We also would not allow it to be sold in stores. Lastly, we define Cannabis as a slightly psychotropic drug that can be smoked.

SIGNPOSTING: Sign posting is the second thing you do as the first or second speaker of either side. Since you have your arguments prepared, you state them in the order that you'll be speaking about them in. You can also VERY briefly say what they're about, if that isn't already clear. This is to help the judges follow you, and to break up your speech a little, so that it doesn't seem like a long blabbing. Also mention who will be speaking about each point.

Today we have 3 major points that we will be speaking about. Our first point, which I will elaborate on further in my speech, will be that decriminalizing cannabis will greatly contribute to our economy. The second point, which my partner will be elaborating on, will be how decriminalizing cannabis will help our global reputation by making us a more progressive and liberal nation. And the third point, which my

partner will also elaborate on, will be that decriminalizing cannabis is part of a free country and technically included in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

POINT/ARGUMENT: These are the main things that your team will be speaking about in your speeches. They are what you want to focus on, and they are what you mention for your signposting. There are usually 3 main points on each side of a debate. The proposition has their 3 points for the resolution. The opposition has their 3 points against the resolution.

For the Proposition: "" is a sub point*

1. Economy

**Less police needed*

**Money can be put towards more important things like social services*

2. Global Reputation

**Other countries look up at Canada*

**Canada will seem more liberal*

**We will be on the forefront of modernizing laws and seem like a progressive country.*

3. Freedom for the People

**We should do let our people do what they want, when they want according to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*

**It's dictatorial of us to not allow the people something they want.*

For the Opposition:

1. Harmful to Health

**Cannabis can cause various health problems.*

**We can't allow our people to have preventable health problems*

2. Harmful for Children

**Children will start to use it from an early age*

**Sets a bad example*

3. Protect People from Themselves

**The government has a duty to protect its people from making the wrong choices*

**They can do what they want, but only to an extent.*

So what do you do when you can't think of enough/any points? You follow the acronym: P.E.R.M.S.

P: POLITICAL

E: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, AND ETHICS

R: RIGHTS, RELIGION

M: MORALS, MILITARY

S: SOCIAL

These are the aspects that our society finds important, thus it is most relevant to bring up points relating to those aspects.

How to state a point and in what order:

Follow the acronym: S.E.X.Y.

S: Statement

E: Explanation of the statement

X: Example of the statement

Y: Why? Why is it important?

CROSS-EXAMINATION: This is the 2 or 3 minutes after your opponent's speech that you have to ask them questions. You should be taking notes during their speech, so that you can remember what they said and what you want to counter with. Don't go directly into telling them that they're wrong. Try to get them to admit that they are. This is called a **QUESTION LINE**. It is when you start off your questioning with a question that has an obvious answer.

Do you believe in the fundamental freedoms?

{They'll say yes!}

Then don't you think that the people should have the right to choose what they want to do with themselves. And that a government that imposes upon what the people can freely do is in a way a totalitarian government?

{They'll say yes!}

AND NOW YOU HIT THEM!:

So then shouldn't people be allowed to smoke cannabis, if they wish?

{Now you've put them in a corner, they can try and squirm out by saying "no," but they probably won't succeed. The judges will have noticed it!}

REBUTAL: When you criticize/poke holes in your opponent's arguments. This happens during your own speech, not during the cross-examination time. THIS CAN BE DONE IN TWO SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Pick the most important points/fallacies that the other team said. (You don't have time to say everything, so pick the big stuff and do not dwell on the unimportant/little things).

2. Logically rebut the points, using evidence and explaining why they are wrong. Feel free to twist their words slightly. But in the case that you choose to twist words, make sure you do it well. Do not twist their words to make yourself sound crazy and do not understand what is going on. And make sure you criticize the point, not the person. Never bring up specific things about the speaker (saying the speaker is ugly or stupid will lose you marks) saying that the point is senseless or false is what you should do.

Another way to remember how to rebut opponent's points is by remembering the acronym "I.C.E."

I = Identify. This is where you identify the point brought up by the opposing side ("They said that implementing the resolution would be good for the economy")

C = Critique. This is where you critique their point and say it's wrong. ("This resolution actually wouldn't be good for the economy")

E = Evidence. This is where you explain why the point was wrong, using evidence. ("This point was wrong because more money would be spent implementing the resolution than would be gained, according to the Statistics Canada Website, which actually says... ____")

Before I go into my constructive speech, I would just like to point out some of the flaws in my opponent's speech. They said that if we decriminalize cannabis our global reputation will improve, however this is false. If we allow our people to harm themselves by using a gateway drug, our global reputation can only decline.

EVIDENCE: Evidence can win or lose a debate, and it usually does. {Now this doesn't mean that you should pack your speech with so much

evidence that peoples' heads start to explode.} Even if you're the smoothest talker out there, you still have to have some evidence to back up your points, otherwise the other team is going to win. The evidence is the proof that you're not just making up everything. There is evidence for every point, you just have to dig deeper to find it in some cases. Finding evidence is much easier in prepared debates, as you have the internet and other sources on hand. In impromptu debates however, you have to rely on those things that you've heard/saw/read sometime before to provide evidence. There are 4 main types of evidence that are used in debates, they are:

STATISTICS: The numbers. They are the hard, undisputable facts. This is the most valid form of evidence since it can't be denied, only countered with other statistics. Use it wisely, though. Use a few, strong numbers, but don't over-do-it. You don't want to have a lot of crazy numbers in the judges' head, but you want to have enough to make him feel that you're right. Remember that this is a speech debate, not a math/probability competition.

EXPERT OPINION: The opinion's of the smart people in the world. This is the second strongest kind of information. Our society -and the judges- value the thoughts of published authors, philosophers, world leaders etc.. They'll believe you if you quote/note that somebody that's considered intelligent said/confirmed what you just stated. Keep in mind that whoever you mention should be well respected. You should NOT quote infamous people like Hitler (unless your debating, and your judge is a member of the Aryan Brotherhood – this is HIGHLY unlikely.) Think about how the person is perceived by Western culture, then decide if it's smart to quote them.

COMMON SENSE: This is the third most effective kind of evidence, purely because it's not universally agreed upon. What may be common sense to you, may be totally foreign to your judge, so beware when doing this. Only use things that seem REALLY obvious, like *“everybody knows that smoking can put you at higher risk for respiratory illnesses.”* This makes sense, just about everybody agrees on that statement. And you don't even need a number to prove it because it's such an obvious statement. On the other hand, something like *“Gaborone is the capital city of Botswana,”* is not known/considered by the majority, and therefore it is not common sense.

YOUR OPINION: This is the type of evidence that you should use the least. Why? Well to put it simply, unless you've won a Noble Prize on the

topic you're debating, nobody cares what you think – okay, maybe your mommy does, but that's about it. Also, if you use too many personal opinions it can seem like you haven't prepared, or as if you don't have any hard facts to support your statements. Remember that your debating, not telling your life story. Don't use anecdotes unless they'll really help, or unless you have NOTHING better to say.

“When I pass by some stoners I can smell their weed. I don't like weed and I don't want to feel as if I'm getting high, too. By permitting cannabis, I'm going to feel like I'm getting forced to inhale the poison, when I don't want to!”

See, you can complain, but it doesn't really have any weight on the debate.

SUMMARY SPEECH: A summary speech is given by the first speaker. The opposition will give their summary speech first, usually after a brief intermission. In the summary speech, you need to show that your team has won the debate. There are 2 strategies that I like to use, and I find that they're effective. The first one is the **3 points**, the second is the **3 questions**. In the 3 points, you bring in the 3 main/most debated points, and you show how your team was right on all 3. In the 3 questions, you bring up the points in question format, and say that your team answered them correctly. This gives the judges a really clear idea of your speech, and helps them see why you were right. You also want to say how the other team failed to rebut your points, and how you managed to rebut their most important points. My old coach used to say that **in your summary speech, you need to seem like somebody who watched the debate, not like someone who participated in it**. You restate what was said in the debate, and how your team was right on all of it, and how the other team was wrong on all of it.

HOW TO END: This is the usual way to close your speech as both the first and second speaker. It's also a good way to reiterate for the judges your points and make them feel like you're right!

Ladies and gentleman for the reasons brought forth to you today by the proposition/opposition {INSERT FIRST POINT HERE}, {INSERT SECOND POINT HERE}, {INSERT THIRD POINT HERE}. We believe that the resolution must and most definitely stand/fall. Thank you!

ALWAYS USE “WE”!: In debates, it’s important to talk in 1st person plural form. This makes your team look like it’s united and as if what you’re saying reflects that of everybody in your team.

JUDGE THE JUDGES!: Judging the judges can really make a difference in your debate. If you see a woman who looks really emotional and not very logical, then you know that you should include more emotional notes in your speech. On the other hand, if you see a stiff, rigid businessman, you know that you should focus more on the numbers.

Copyright © 2014 Natasa Micovic. All Rights Reserved.