

DEBATING FOR DIVERSITY: HANDBOOK ON ORGANISING A LOCAL
DEBATING COMMUNITY

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION (Krisztián Simon)	2
The role of debate and debate clubs in society and the university environment	2
The British Parliamentary debate format.....	4
Overview of the book's contents	8
2. STARTING A DEBATE CLUB (Novak Čelebić)	9
Institutional recognition	10
Budgeting and financial planning.....	11
Recruiting members and founding officers	11
Drafting a statute or constitution	12
3. PLANNING TRAINING SESSIONS (Krisztián Simon)	13
The content of the training session for beginner debaters	13
The content of the training session for advanced debaters	16
What does a training session look like?	17
Other debate-related activities	19
4. COACHING AND ADJUDICATION (Reja Debevc)	20
Building coaching adjudication skills.....	20
Training judges internally	20
Resources for adjudication and coaching norms	21
Creating effective feedback loops	22
5. ORGANISING A DEBATE TOURNAMENT (Rok Hafner)	23
6. DEBATE EXERCISES (Novak Čelebić and introduction by Rok Hafner)	26
References and Additional Resources	34

1. INTRODUCTION (Krisztián Simon)

The role of debate and debate clubs in society and the university environment

The following handbook aims to promote debate and debate education, which has many benefits in modern, democratic societies and university environments. In our modern, information-saturated world, through debate we can develop essential skills that enable us to view world events with critical thinking and to be open to different points of view, even those that sometimes differ from our own.

This handbook was created with the intention of filling a gap, as it offers readers a framework for the basics of debating and the use of the British Parliamentary debate format in a university setting, all in a very practical way so that it can be useful for novice debaters or those wishing to start a debate club.

The debate goes far beyond a simple dialogue, as it has a framework that forces us to examine a problem from multiple perspectives, to think critically, and to support our own position with arguments and present them appropriately to others. It stimulates empathy and diversity, as we become open to learning about other points of view, while also having the power to build community.

Debate at university level is not just a leisure activity or professional discourse, but rather an activity that develops the skills needed in the 21st century labour market. These include critical thinking, which is indispensable in our information-rich world and can be particularly useful in understanding, analysing, and solving complex problems. Given its practical nature, it is also an ideal way to develop rhetorical and communication skills, as these can only be acquired to a sufficient degree through practice. At the same time, it develops the improvisational skills of debaters, which also play an important role in any field of work. Several studies (Hill, 2002, pp. 49-53) have demonstrated that critical thinking can be developed through competitive debate.

The university environment is the perfect place to start and spread debate, as this is the age when the above-mentioned skills can be acquired most easily, since everyone

is eager to acquire new knowledge and is very open-minded. Debate is one of the most valuable aspects of academic life, as it promotes the exchange of knowledge and information among students. It also encourages them to treat this knowledge critically and to always strive to examine a given situation in a more nuanced way.

Debate clubs play a key role in promoting this, so this handbook aims to provide practical knowledge for setting them up and maintaining them. The debate activities organized by debate clubs not only develop skills and professional knowledge, but also play a strong community-building role, as participating students find a safe environment where they can freely share their opinions, offer constructive criticism of others' opinions, and thereby strengthen their self-confidence.

At the same time, these activities encourage students to acquire even more knowledge, become even better informed about events in public and academic life, and always keep up to date with the latest information.

Another very important, perhaps one of the most important added values of debate clubs is the promotion of diversity, as the university environment is a very diverse arena where students from different disciplines and backgrounds come together and bring their own life experiences, which they can use to grow as a community. All this takes place within a regulated framework that seeks to lay the foundations for a culture of mutual respect and openness to other people and opinions.

This diversity becomes even more pronounced when cross-border encounters take place between students from different countries, who can exchange experiences through debate and learn about the different worldviews of different cultures. Erasmus+ debate projects or the WUDC (World Universities Debating Championship) and EUDC (European Universities Debating Championship) provide the perfect opportunity for this.

Ultimately, it also contributes to strengthening the fundamental values of democracy, which is based on the clash of different viewpoints and the will of the majority. This can only be achieved effectively if there is openness to social dialogue among as large a community as possible. This handbook is intended to promote the achievement of

these lofty goals, and we hope it will provide readers with useful and practical knowledge.

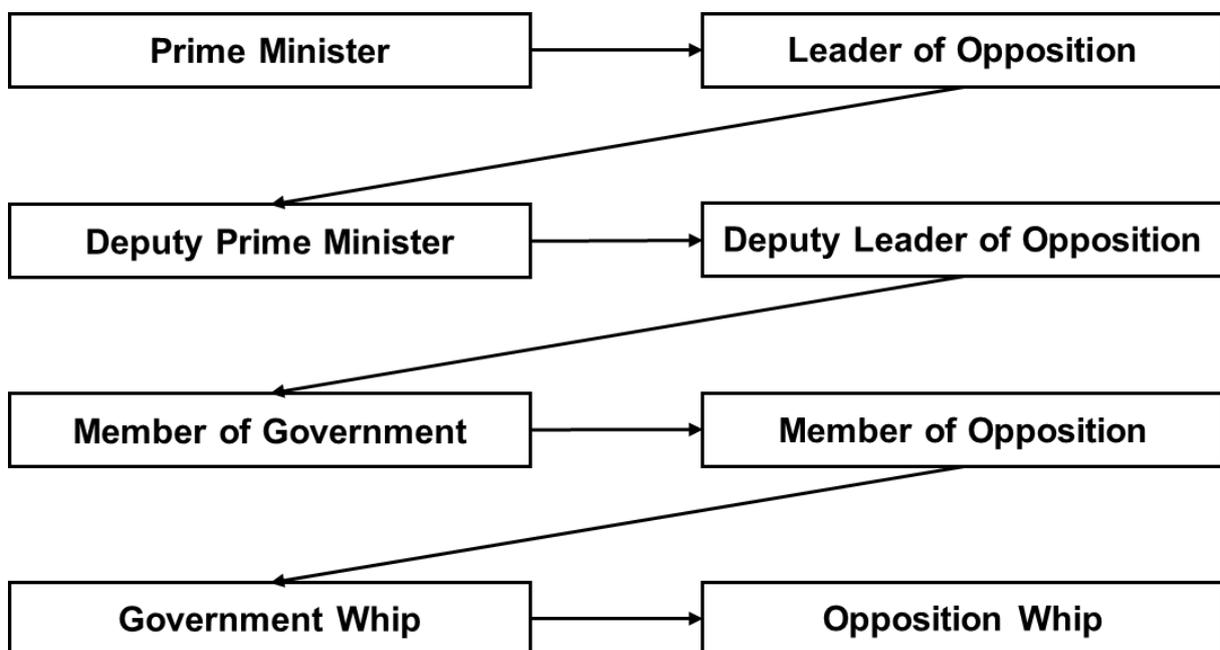
The British Parliamentary debate format

The British Parliamentary debate format emerged in the second part of the 1800s among university students in Liverpool, where young people interested in and open to dialogue established its framework and rules (Haapala, 2012, p. 26). Today, this format is used in the WUDC (World Universities Debating Championship) and the EUDC (European Universities Debating Championship) and has become widely accepted as the standard format for debates in university circles.

The special feature of this format is that although two points of view clash with each other, the representatives of the two sides are also divided into two teams. More specifically, the affirmative side is represented by the government, while the negative side is represented by the opposition. Each side has an opening and closing government and an opening and closing opposition. The table and diagram below show how the debate proceeds in this format. Each speaker has 7 minutes to speak.

ORDER OF SPEAKERS AND SPEAKING TIME IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE FORMAT		
1.	Prime Minister (<i>first speaker of the opening government</i>)	7 minutes
2.	Leader of Opposition (<i>first speaker of the opening opposition</i>)	7 minutes
3.	Deputy Prime Minister (<i>second speaker of the opening government</i>)	7 minutes
4.	Deputy Leader of Opposition (<i>second speaker of the opening opposition</i>)	7 minutes

5.	Member of Government (<i>first speaker of the closing government</i>)	7 minutes
6.	Member of Opposition (<i>first speaker of the closing opposition</i>)	7 minutes
7.	Government Whip (<i>second speaker of the closing government</i>)	7 minutes
8.	Opposition Whip (<i>second speaker of the closing opposition</i>)	7 minutes



The following is a summary of the responsibilities of speakers during the British Parliamentary debate (Johnson, 2009, pp. 105-156):

The **Prime Minister** has two main tasks in the debate: on the one hand, interpreting the motion and defining the terms it contains and on the other hand, presenting arguments in support of the government's position.

They begin their speech by interpreting the motion, which provides a framework for the debate. It is very important to be fair to the opposition, as one of the cornerstones

of rational debate is that the parties agree on the interpretation of the motion, which allows a possibility for both sides to present their arguments. It is very important that the Prime Minister fulfil this role properly, because a poor definition usually leads to a weak debate in which the arguments are less likely to prevail.

In the case of policy-type motions, the interpretation of the motion is immediately followed by the presentation of a model designed to provide a basis for the position defended by the government. This is followed by a brief presentation of the government's position and the beginning of the explanation of the arguments.

The **Leader of Opposition** accepts the Prime Minister's interpretation of the motion and begins to refute their arguments, with the primary goal of weakening the opening government's position. If he does not consider the interpretation of the motion to be fair, they give their own interpretation, which they must justify in each case. They then provide an insight into the opening opposition's position by briefly presenting their arguments and then begin to explain one or two of them.

The **Deputy Prime Minister** has three main tasks: to rebuild the arguments put forward by the Prime Minister and refuted by the Leader of Opposition, to refute the arguments put forward by the Leader of Opposition and to bring in new arguments in support of the opening government's position.

During the reconstruction, they elaborate on the argument put forward by the Prime Minister, reinforcing it with new examples and logical connections. In their rebuttal, they can point out logical fallacies in the argumentation and the lack of logical connections. Finally, they can introduce one or more new arguments to reinforce the opening government position.

The **Deputy Leader of Opposition** has the same three main roles as the Deputy Prime Minister: they must rebuild the arguments put forward by the Leader of Opposition to reinforce the position of the opening opposition, then refute the opening government's arguments, and finally put forward one or more arguments to reinforce their own position.

The **Member of Government** opens the second half of the debate, in which the closing government will be tasked with elaborating on the opening government's position, approaching it from a different angle and presenting new arguments.

They have two main tasks. The first is to introduce a new approach using new arguments, while remaining faithful to the position defined by the opening government. They need to continue to attack the arguments put forward by the opening opposition in support of its own position (Barker, 2016, pp. 57-58).

The **Member of Opposition** also remains consistent with the position laid down by the opening opposition but tries to approach the topic from a different angle and bring up new arguments.

In addition to presenting new arguments, their task is to further attack the arguments put forward by the opening government and to refute the arguments put forward by the Member of Government. When presenting new arguments, it is important to expand on the opposition's position, as the Member of Government has done.

Next comes the **Government Whip**, who has three main tasks. First, they must refute the arguments put forward by the Member of Opposition and by the opening opposition. Secondly, they must rebuild the arguments put forward by the Member of Government and reinforce them one last time. At the same time, since they are the last to speak on behalf of the government, they also have the task of summarising the debate, briefly explaining why the government's arguments prevail over those of the opposition.

Finally, the **Opposition Whip** takes the floor, whose role is similar to that of the Government Whip: they refute the arguments put forward by the government one last time, reiterate the arguments put forward by the opposition, and then summarise the debate and close it. In the summaries, it is not necessary to summarise the entire debate, but only to reflect on the crucial moments.

During the seven-minute speeches, there is an opportunity for **points of information (POIs)** (Hannan, Berkman and Meadows, 2012, pp. 164-165.), which help to make the

debate even more dynamic. This is possible at any time except during the first and last minutes. The first and last minutes are protected, and the speaker cannot be interrupted. Between the first and seventh minutes, points of information may be raised, which may be a question or a statement in 15 seconds. After each point of information, 30 seconds must elapse before the next one can be raised.

On the government side, anyone can ask questions of opposition speakers, while on the opposition side, anyone can ask questions of government members. It is important to note that the speaker has the exclusive right to accept or reject these questions and, if accepted, to decide when the opponent may raise the point of information. Rejection, as the rest of the debate, must be done respectfully, for example, 'Thank you, I will not accept it now' or 'I would like to accept it later.' (Harvey-Smith, 2011, pp. 56-57).

The person who raised the point of information cannot ask a question in return, and no dialogue can occur between the speaker and the questioner. The point of information makes the British Parliamentary debate format truly enjoyable, as we can see not only two monologues, but also a dialogue between members of the government and the opposition.

Overview of the book's contents

After this brief introduction to the British Parliamentary debate format, I would like to briefly outline the contents of this handbook, which first provides readers with an insight into debating and the steps necessary to start a debate club, all in a way that is easy to put into practice.

The book goes on to discuss how we can contribute to building and growing a community through debate and debate clubs, and how we can play a significant role in preserving our community in this way. Readers will also find answers to questions such as how to set up a training session and what other activities they can introduce to promote debate clubs and debate.

The book also covers coaching and adjudication, providing readers with practical advice that will make it much easier to evaluate a debate later. Finally, it discusses the process of organizing a tournament, from the most basic administrative tasks to providing professional support.

At the end of the book, readers will find 12 lessons covering a variety of topics, providing both theoretical and practical foundations for training sessions to facilitate the work of debate club leaders.

2. STARTING A DEBATE CLUB (Novak Čelebić)

Starting a debate club is one of the most effective ways to build a community of students who value discussion, reasoning, and open-mindedness. Debate clubs are more than extracurricular activities, they are spaces that teach participants to think critically, express their ideas clearly, and engage respectfully with differing viewpoints. A well-organised debate society can also serve as a bridge between academic learning and civic participation, helping young people to develop confidence, teamwork, and leadership skills that will benefit them long after graduation.

However, creating a debate club requires more than enthusiasm alone. For a society to thrive, it needs a clear structure, official recognition, and transparent management. These foundations ensure that the club can access institutional support, funding, and visibility, allowing it to grow sustainably over time. Establishing such a framework also helps future generations of students to continue running the club effectively, even after the founding members have moved on.

This section outlines the key steps to starting a debate club: understanding administrative and institutional requirements, obtaining university recognition, creating a basic budget, recruiting founding members, and drafting a statute or constitution. Each step ensures that the club is not only launched successfully but also positioned for long-term stability and impact.

Budgeting and financial planning

Sound financial planning is vital for the stability and credibility of any debate club. A clear budget ensures that activities can be carried out smoothly and that members understand how resources are used.

Begin by identifying expected expenses such as promotional materials, registration fees for tournaments, and travel costs. Estimating costs for a full academic year provides a realistic picture of the funds required.

Most institutions provide funding opportunities through students' unions or departmental grants for recognised societies. In addition, local businesses or community organisations might offer sponsorships in exchange for promotional visibility at events. Other creative methods include hosting fundraising debates, or hosting tournaments. Make sure to follow local, national as well as European grants – Erasmus+ or Solidarity corps projects can be a way to raise funds for your debate club, depending on the exact institutional framework.

Appointing a treasurer helps maintain financial transparency. They should record all transactions and prepare short financial reports at the end of each term.

Consider the club's financial future from the start. Keep digital records that can be easily transferred to new officers, and explore opportunities for external funding through partnerships with debate organisations or youth programmes. Developing a multi-source funding strategy, rather than relying on one grant, ensures resilience in changing circumstances.

Effective budgeting is not merely administrative; it demonstrates professionalism and accountability. A well-managed budget reassures funders, strengthens trust among members, and ensures the club can continue operating even as leadership changes.

Recruiting members and founding officers

Recruiting engaged members and establishing a reliable leadership team are crucial steps in building a strong and lasting debate club. A motivated group ensures that activities run smoothly, while a clear leadership structure provides continuity and accountability.

Begin by promoting the club widely within the institution. Use noticeboards, social media, and classroom visits to introduce the idea of debating and its benefits — improved public speaking, critical thinking, and confidence. Hosting an open demonstration debate or a short workshop can attract curious students who might not yet see themselves as debaters. Collaboration with teachers or faculty members can also help reach students across different subjects.

Aim for diversity in recruitment. Debate thrives on varied perspectives, so encourage participation from students in different academic disciplines and backgrounds. Create a welcoming environment where beginners feel supported and returning members can mentor others.

Once a core group of members is secured, hold an inaugural meeting to elect or appoint founding officers. Typical roles include:

1. President: oversees the club's direction and represents it publicly.
2. Treasurer: manages finances and budgeting.
3. Lead coach: organises workshops and learning materials.

There can be overlap among the roles, especially in newer and smaller clubs it is often, for example, for the president to also lead the workshops. Clearly defining responsibilities ensures accountability and prevents confusion. Rotating positions annually helps develop leadership skills and maintains continuity as members graduate or move on.

Strong recruitment and transparent leadership provide the foundation for a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable debate club, one capable of lasting beyond its first generation of members.

Drafting a statute or constitution

A statute, sometimes called a constitution, provides the legal and organisational framework for the debate club. It defines how the club operates, who can join, and how decisions are made, ensuring fairness, continuity, and accountability.

When drafting the statute, keep it clear, concise, and practical. Typical sections include:

- Name and purpose: a short statement outlining the club's mission and objectives.
- Membership: eligibility criteria, rights, and responsibilities.
- Leadership structure: roles of officers, election procedures, and term lengths.
- Finances: basic rules on budgeting, expenditure, and transparency.
- Amendments: how future changes to the statute can be proposed and approved.

It is often helpful to use templates from other student societies or debate networks as a starting point. Once completed, review the draft with your faculty advisor or student union representative to ensure compliance with institutional rules.

3. PLANNING TRAINING SESSIONS (Krisztián Simon)

In this chapter, readers will find answers to questions such as how to prepare for a training session, how to strike a balance between theory and practice, and what other activities besides debates can be used to attract university students and contribute to community building.

The content of the training session for beginner debaters

It is very important to know what kind of group we are dealing with: have they already participated in debates, or are they complete beginners in this genre? If we are holding a session for a group that has never debated before, or has very little experience in this area, it is worth placing greater emphasis on the theoretical part.

The very first lesson can be about arguments and reasoning, as this is the basis of rational debate and it is essential that students learn this right from the start. Here, we can choose any argument structure we like and try to illustrate it to students with examples.

An example of this is the Toulmin's argument model (Karbach, 1987, pp. 81-92), which consists of the following elements:

Claim (conclusion) - this is the main argument or the statement you want your audience to accept.

Data (evidence) - these are the facts, examples, statistics, or expert opinions that support your claim.

Warrant (reasoning) - this **connects the data to the claim**, explaining **why the evidence supports the claim** and it is the most important part of the argument.

Backing (support) - it strengthens the warrant by providing research, expert opinions, or logical explanations that prove the warrant's validity.

Rebuttal (counterargument) - this acknowledges opposing views or situations where your claim might not hold true, recognizing opposing views shows fairness and strengthens your position.

Qualifier (certainty) - this adds realism and makes arguments more credible, indicates how certain or strong your claim is.

Of course, we can choose a different argument structure, or we can even start by asking every argument to answer the question 'Why?' and thus encourage students to explain their arguments in as much detail as possible. In Lesson 1 of Appendix 2, readers will find an example of a specific exercise designed to teach building arguments.

To make the debate class as practical as possible, it is worth giving the students a motion to work with, which they can use as a basis for writing an argument that can later be analysed with the whole class.

After argument building, the lesson continues with its counterpart, refutation, where, after a short theoretical introduction, it is worth putting it into practice and thus repeating the argument. A perfect method for this is to divide the students into teams of two, where one side writes an argument on a given topic and the other side tries to

refute it, then they switch roles and repeat the process. It is recommended to present this in front of the whole class so that we can analyse it.

Once students can build arguments confidently and refute these arguments, we can move on to motions and their types. Here, we should start by explaining what 'This House' means in motions, which can be the Government of a country or an average citizen, or, in the case of actor-type motions, the person appearing in it (Meany, Shuster, 2003, p. 61). We can ask the students to form a motion, then we can return briefly to the lessons from previous sessions on argumentation and refutation, and we can bring up one of each. At the same time, it is important to emphasize the interpretation of the motion and to try to interpret several different types of motions, either together or in small groups.

Next, the British Parliamentary debate format can be explained. Here, it is worth explaining to students in detail the role of each speaker in the debate (see Chapter 1). At this stage, mini debates can be organized, simulating the roles of the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition, or students can try their hand at the roles of the closing government and opposition and see how they can bring a new approach to a given topic. At this stage, it is worth emphasizing the point of information, as this is the one of the most interesting parts of the British Parliamentary debate format.

These are the topics that should be introduced to novice debaters in this order before the debate begins. Later, the book also discusses how to structure a training session, providing readers with more detailed answers on how to start a debate club and run it in a logical manner.

The content of the training session for advanced debaters

We are dealing with advanced debaters, as the students have already mastered the basics mentioned above and may have been debating for some time. In this case, in addition to repetition, it is worth deepening their knowledge of debating and delving more into the details.

At this point, it is worth focusing on speaking style, emphasizing rhetorical techniques and how to find a balance between rhetoric and logic. As a theoretical component, we recommend introducing the basics of public speaking: How is a public speech structured? What rhetorical techniques should be used? We can then put this into practice by asking students to write an argumentative speech on a given topic and then deliver it in front of the class, so that we can analyse it together and highlight its strengths or areas for improvement.

Developing a teamwork strategy is also important, so that teams of two can prepare for a debate as effectively as possible, even within the framework of a tournament. It is important to approach the students during their preparation for the debates and help them prepare, perhaps pointing out how appropriate or inappropriate their chosen preparation strategy is. Give them advice on how to make the most of the 15-20 minutes they have for preparation. An example of this is to first clarify the interpretation of the topic in 1-2 minutes, then spend 4-5 minutes thinking about arguments individually. In the next 7-8 minutes, discuss what they have come up with, and then in the remaining 3-4 minutes, have them write down their thoughts individually. We can also improve the debate strategy during the debate by providing feedback after each session on how we saw the team dynamics during the debate and what could be improved in concrete terms.

This is followed by impact comparison. Here, it is important to illustrate with specific examples how impact comparison can be implemented in practice, and it is worth bringing up value-based motions for illustration, in which two very important values are in conflict with each other.

A very important part of debates is that students can incorporate real-world knowledge into their arguments, so once the above-mentioned skills are working well in practice and presenting arguments is no longer a problem, we can organize a debate for which students can prepare in advance. Give them a few days to do this. It is important to note that the debate will not be won by the team which can gather the most statistical data during the preparation time, but by the team who can use this information in a way that reinforces their argument.

It may happen that more students arrive for a session than can participate in the debate, so it is worth involving them in judging and teaching them how to evaluate a debate. This is also important for community building, because for the debate club to survive in the long term, we will need as many trainers as possible, so this will also prepare the students for this.

However, the content in this section is not set in stone, so it can be easily combined or expanded upon with further practice.

What does a training session look like?

This section will present the content of an entire training session, which can be conducted with any group after they have mastered the basics of debate and argumentation.

It is very important to find a balance between theory and practice, because without theory, practice will not work, but if practice is neglected, then the debate loses its meaning, since we are talking about a very practical genre.

Each training session lasts between two and two and a half hours on average, depending on how many students participate and what kind of session we have planned for. For effectiveness, it is advisable to limit each group to a maximum of 15 participants.

Try to start every debate session with a short argumentation or improvisation exercise to lighten the mood and warm up for the debate. This could be a short situation that students have to act out, a short public speaking exercise, or even arguing alongside a few funny situations. Set aside 15-25 minutes of the session for this.

This should be followed by a short theoretical section lasting 15-25 minutes, in which one or more of the topics mentioned above can be covered. We should strive to make this as interactive as possible.

Then the debate itself can begin. Introduce the topic and give the students 15-20 minutes to prepare. The time limits described in Chapter 1 can be reduced to 6 or even 4 minutes, especially for beginners, but advanced students should work on being able to speak for 8 minutes without difficulty.

After the debate, one of the most important parts of the training session comes, the evaluation. Let's set aside time for this, at least 20-30 minutes, and give students personal feedback, reflecting on how well they managed to fulfil their assigned role and how well the arguments and refutations they presented hold up. After explaining our decision, we should always provide constructive feedback on what the teams that lost the debate lacked and what they could have done to win the debate. This way, we can also make them feel that this is a fair debate, where every team has an equal chance of winning.

During the evaluation, we also ask the students how they felt and what they would change in a future debate. We also ask them to provide feedback, either personally or anonymously, about the session so that we can tailor the training session to their needs as much as possible.

Finally, the most important thing is to be very flexible and to adapt the sessions depending on the level and mood of the students. After 3-4 training sessions, we should see visible progress in the students, if this does not happen, it is worth going back to the basics and repeating them.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, debate is intended to contribute to professional and

personal development as well as to community building and growth, and to this end, it is important that as trainers we focus not only on development in debate, but also on community building through various activities not entirely related to debate. In this section you will find some examples of such activities.

Other debate-related activities

Debate is basically an entertaining and interesting genre, but sometimes we can organize even a crazy-debate evening, where we discuss seemingly frivolous topics in a slightly more informal way. In such cases, the rules of the debate are a little more flexible and other entertaining elements can be incorporated, for example, having them incorporate predetermined words, phrases or proverbs into their speech or presenting their team's position from the perspective of a specific person etc.

Another activity could be watching documentaries, which are also based on argumentation, so they could even be analysed on such occasions or just for fun, as the knowledge gained here can be utilized in a later discussion.

If the students agree, we can record a debate and then review and analyse it during another training session, drawing many conclusions that can be useful in developing both verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

We can organize board game nights that aim to help students get to know each other better, to lighten the mood so that they feel more confident when they must stand up in front of an audience and state their own point of view. We can also bring board games that deal with moral dilemmas related to debate.

If there is no Tournament to prepare for or it seems like a very distant goal, we can organize a local Tournament where teams can try themselves in a live competitive situation.

The above activities are not exhaustive and can of course be supplemented with other

ones that increase students' trust in each other or the skills needed for debating. The most important thing is to always strive for flexibility during the training sessions, because a truly good trainer is one who can adapt to the needs of the students and other unforeseen situations.

4. COACHING AND ADJUDICATION (Reja Debevc)

Building coaching adjudication skills

Judge and coach training is essential for developing and sustaining a successful debate club. Judges are responsible for ensuring high quality feedback that promotes improvement of debaters in the club. Strong judging improves the quality of debates, fairness and learning outcomes. Coaches contribute to the organization of debate activities and oversee the learning process of debaters. Many clubs face challenges with finding judges, retaining them and developing their skills. This is especially difficult for smaller clubs or those lacking institutional support. They often have to rely on internal coach and judge development within the club which is why online resources and materials are especially important.

Training judges internally

More experienced members often take on a role of coaches and judges. Experienced debaters should be encouraged to judge novice rounds, practice giving round and individual feedback. This can also be used as an opportunity for them to directly receive feedback from debaters on their judging and feedback skills. Judges should aim to deliver clear decisions, practice the articulation of feedback and work towards higher accuracy of calls. Through structured judge and coach training sessions debate clubs can cultivate and maintain high quality judges. This can look like judge training workshops every few weeks. For example, using recorded debates from previous sessions to practice judging and have a group discussion among judges in training; discussing controversial or dissenting calls to understand different reasons for the decision; or role-playing giving feedback to each other. Particularly recorded debates can have several educational functions. Less experienced judges often initially struggle with listening, note taking and scoring speeches. It can be challenging to

translate what you hear into notes and then into feedback. Recorded debates enable stopping the debate, ensuring more time to write and process as well as planning out structured feedback. Once there is a base of solid judges, newer judges can shadow them in debate rounds. This can be an opportunity for questions and answers through the guidance of more experienced judges. Moreover, internal tournaments within the club allow for additional practice in a more competitive setting. If needed everyone can rotate between judging and debating roles. Lastly, there should be clear judging standards established within the club. Members should align on what good analysis and feedback sound like. Scoring should be standardised and understood by both debaters and judges to promote fairness and trust in feedback.

Resources for adjudication and coaching norms

Offering training resources for both judges and coaches is crucial for their development. In this way they are given the opportunity to learn independently of the regular debate program and know where to seek additional knowledge and support. Adjudication is not just about picking the winner, but it entails several skills like evaluation of analysis, weighing, presentation and others. Time at debate sessions is a limited resource and often there will not be enough of it to dedicate to both debater and judge development. This is why it's important judges in training know where to look for additional materials. Some reliable resources that can be accessed online are WUDC or EUDC adjudication core guides, debate organisation YouTube channels with round analyses, national debate association judging tests (some circuits have online calibration quizzes).

Reflection of the judge thinking process should be encouraged. Questions like *What general knowledge is expected from judges? How do I decide the winner in a close round? Or How do I check my personal biases so they do not affect the adjudication process?* Promote deep understanding of judging instead of just the memorization of the rules.

Creating effective feedback loops

Effective feedback should be seen as the engine that constantly advances debating, judging and coaching skills. Judges should provide feedback after debates or debate exercises. Debaters should be encouraged to ask clarifying questions that challenge judges to provide the best possible explanation. Judges and coaches should cooperate during sessions and after debate tournaments. They are encouraged to review notes together regarding the performance of their debaters and discuss areas of improvements that should be addressed in the following sessions. Judges, coaches and debaters should keep feedback logs where they track their progress and feedback. In this way they can notice pattern and repeating feedback that suggests what they should be working on. Lastly, it is the responsibility of all members to cultivate a culture of growth and improvement. Feedback should always be constructive, specific and actionable. Criticism should be pedagogical and encouraging to motivate learning.

Overall, coaching and adjudication skills can best be developed through practice and constant feedback loops from debaters. Judges can use online resources to improve, especially when there isn't enough time dedicated to judge development during debate sessions. Reflection is a key tool that promotes deep understanding of the judging process. Coaches and judges should cooperate, compare notes and discuss areas of improvement for debaters that training sessions should address.

5. ORGANISING A DEBATE TOURNAMENT (Rok Hafner)

If you manage to get your debate club up and running, it is highly likely that at some point, you will feel the need to organise a debate competition. Debate tournaments aren't only an event where debaters practise their skills and go off on all the adrenaline and excitement that invariably go along with it, but also events where communities are built. Connections are formed by shared experiences and attending and organising events, including tournaments, are a great opportunity for that.

Easier than to organise a tournament is, of course, to attend one. Depending on your geographical location, opportunities vary considerably. Since Covid online tournaments are a regular fixture, but yelling at a computer on a weekend is a less satisfying experience for most than yelling at a real person on a weekend, so online tournaments might not be for everyone. If you are wondering where to look for tournaments, Facebook remains shockingly important for the global debating community a lot of information about the tournaments can be found there. Posts at "Debating Seriousposting" (they say the name was funny in the late 2000s) or "Europe and IONA Debating" reach tens of thousands of budding and – to be fair – long retired debaters. A particularly useful resource is the adequately named "Global Debating Spreadsheet", a regularly updated sheet with information about tournaments, online and in person, happening around the planet. Since this is arguably the most useful link in this handbook, I am attaching it here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R9s3MAh1H_7rJ9NQhO18p6o7bvekrIDTk27I7emXk6o/htmlview#gid=1155692171

Partly because attending tournaments in other cities or countries can be a considerable strain on personal finances of debaters and partly because at some point, debaters usually feel the need to "give back to the community", organising tournaments is a surprisingly popular pastime of university debaters, considering all the stress and unpaid labour such organising puts on them. The logistics of organising a tournament, although from a perspective of a tabber (a person responsible for, among others, matching teams together and creating so-called 'draws' or 'match-ups') are more than sufficiently explained in an online resource aimed at users of Tabbycat,

a tabbing software. The second most useful link (if you are wondering the third one is the section on debate exercises) also merits to be inserted in the actual text and here it is:

<https://tabbycat.readthedocs.io/en/stable/guide/tournament-logistics.html>

From an organiser, or in debateland language: a convenor's, perspective, the best way to learn about organising a tournament is to talk to people who have done it before. This handbook will not go into a lot of detail, but it is important that you have a venue, a schedule, and then staff: volunteers who will help with food, Chief adjudicators who are responsible for motions and judges, tabber (mentioned above) and potentially equity and accessibility officers, with, completely unsurprisingly, one being responsible for 'equity' and the other one for accessibility. Tournaments can last for a day, or for more. The majority of them happens across a weekend, and here is a possible schedule of one:

Schedule:

Friday, 14th of March 2025
20:30-01:00 Evening socials - 'The Beertija'
Saturday, 15th of March 2025
08:00-08:30 Registration and Breakfast
08:30-09:00 Announcements
09:00-11:30 Round 1
11:30-13:45 Round 2
13:45-14:45 Lunch
14:45-17:00 Round 3
17:00-18:30 Round 4 (Silent)
20:30-02:00 Evening socials - 'Ritam grada'
Sunday, 16th of March 2025
08:30-9:00 Registration and Breakfast
09:00-09:15 Announcements
09:15-11:15 Round 5 (Silent)
11:15-11:30 Break Announcement
11:30-13:00 Open Semifinals/Novice Final
13:00-14:00 Lunch
14:00-16:00 Grand Final
16:00-16:30 Closing Ceremony

Organised by your one and only Vladimira and Lovro **See less**

Zagreb, Croatia

The photo was taken from Facebook and this is a schedule of Zagreb Open 2025 (https://www.facebook.com/events/1514002335930280?active_tab=about).

You ideally want to promote your tournament (through Facebook, obviously) and it is highly recommended that you have some kind of a budget in mind. The costs of chief adjudicators and other tournament personnel are usually covered by the tournament, so that along with potential expenses for the venue usually forms the bulk of your fixed costs.

Tournaments usually include food and sometimes accommodation as well in their registration fee and this is usually the bulk of variable costs. Experienced debate judges called Independent adjudicators, typically chosen by the chief adjudicators after posting a Google form somewhere on Facebook, usually have their costs covered in part or in full and are sometimes offered travel waivers as well. This is because tournaments usually want to attract experienced judges, because then everyone will have a nice experience. The other way to 'gather' judges is to 'force' teams to bring them, creating rules in the registration process (for example $n=n$, meaning that the number of judges has to be the same as the number of teams). An important caveat is that institutional judges can sometimes be rather inexperienced and may not contribute a lot to the quality of the judging pool.

Participants usually appreciate that tournaments run on time, that the food is good, that the rooms are not too hot or too cold,... This chapter offered only a brief overview of what it takes to run a tournament and should be a decent enough starting point for anyone interested in organising one.

6. DEBATE EXERCISES (Novak Čelebić and introduction by Rok Hafner)

The following pages include some exercises that can be used at your debate club. You should adapt them to your needs, making them longer or short, more or less difficult, depending on the group you are working with. More resources can be found on Za in proti's website: <https://zainproti.si/gradiva/>

Title	Building Arguments		
Duration	90-120 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn the structure of an argument and practise forming clear, logical, and evidence-based points that could be used in a debate. By the end of the lesson, they should be able to distinguish between opinions and arguments and construct basic statements supported by reasoning and examples.		
Activities			Time
Introduction: The coach leads a short discussion on the difference between opinions and arguments, using simple examples from everyday topics.			10 minutes
Explanation: The coach introduces the three-part structure of an argument—claim, analysis, example, and impact. He goes over each part in detail and gives short examples of each. The coach involves the group by asking questions and asking them to come up with examples.			40-50 minutes
Exercise: In small groups, students receive basic motions and prepare one argument following the given structure.			20 minutes
Presentation: Each group shares its argument, while the class briefly discusses which parts were most convincing.			10-20 minutes
Conclusion and questions: The coach gives the opportunity to the group to ask questions, and sums up what we have learned			10-20 minutes

Title	Responding to Arguments		
Duration	90-110 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn how to listen critically, identify weaknesses in others' reasoning, and respond effectively through rebuttal. By the end of the session, they should be able understand the basis of refuting arguments		
Activities			Time
Introduction: The coach explains what a rebuttal is and why it is vital in debate. Examples show how a respond to an opponent's argument. The group should be involved in trying out how to rebut arguments,			30 minutes
Pair exercise: Students work in pairs; one presents a short argument while the other gives a rebuttal. They then switch roles. The coach provides feedback and advice on how to improve.			40-60 minutes
Conclusion and questions: Students ask questions, and the coach summarizes what was learned about rebuttal			10-20 minutes

Title	Understanding Motions		
Duration	110 - 120 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn to recognise and interpret different types of debate motions and to identify the strategic and analytical steps required to approach each kind. By the end of the lesson, they should be able to distinguish motions, identify key actors and actions, and define motions fairly and logically.		
Activities			Time
Introduction and explanation: The coach explains what motions are and outlines the main types: policy (“This House would...”), value (“This House believes that...”), and fact (“This House believes that... is true”).			20 minutes
Analysis exercise: The class breaks down several motions together, identifying the actor, the action, and the principle or outcome involved.			30-40 minutes
Group activity: Each group receives a list of mixed motion types and classifies them, discussing how their debate strategy would differ depending on the type.			20 minutes
Reflection: Students individually select one motion, identify its type, and write a short paragraph explaining how they would frame the debate and define key terms.			20 minutes
Conclusion and questions: Students ask questions, and the coach sums up what			10 minutes

was learned	

Title	Points of Information		
Duration	90 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn how to offer, accept, and respond to Points of Information (POIs) effectively during a debate. By the end of the lesson, they should understand the strategic purpose of POIs, the rules for offering them, and how to use them to strengthen their case or challenge their opponents.		
Activities			Time
Introduction: The coach explains what Points of Information are, when they can be offered, and the rules governing their use in debate.			20 minutes
Demonstration: The coach models good and bad POIs, highlighting differences in timing, relevance, and tone. Students identify which examples are effective and why.			30 minutes
Pair practice: Students work in pairs, delivering short 30-second speeches while the other offers POIs. They switch roles and reflect on timing and phrasing.			30 minutes
Conclusion and questions: Students ask questions, and the coach sums up what was learned			10 minutes

Title	Speaking Style		
Duration	80-90 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn how delivery affects the persuasiveness of their arguments and are encouraged to develop an engaging and clear speaking style. By the end of the lesson, they will understand that voice, tone, pace, and body language help more effectively to communicate ideas.		
Activities			Time
Introduction: The coach explains the importance of speaking style in debate and discusses elements such as tone, volume, pace, clarity, and body language.			30 minutes
Demonstration: The coach delivers a short speech twice, once with poor delivery (monotone, too fast, no gestures) and once with strong delivery, to illustrate how style changes audience perception.			10 minutes
Individual practice: Students prepare a one-minute speech on a simple topic and focus on delivery rather than content. The teacher provides short feedback on clarity and confidence. The coach provides feedback and encourages students.			30 minutes
Reflection: The class discusses which techniques improved delivery the most and how to adapt speaking style to different audiences or debate settings.			10-20 minutes

Title	Debate Strategy		
Duration	90-110 minutes		
Supplies needed			
Main objective	Students learn how to plan and structure their approach to a debate, balancing content, timing, and team coordination. By the end of the lesson, they should understand how to prioritise arguments, anticipate opposition points, and adapt their case to different formats or roles.		
Activities			Time
Introduction: The coach explains what debate strategy means and why preparation and structure matter. Examples are given of strong strategic decisions, such as focusing on key issues rather than covering too much ground.			20 minutes
Mini-lecture: The coach outlines key elements of strategy understanding burdens, prioritising arguments, time management, and teamwork.			30 minutes
Group planning exercise: In small teams, students receive a motion and plan their case, deciding which arguments to lead with, which to defend, and how to divide speaking roles.			30-40 minutes
Reflection: The class discusses what made certain strategies effective and how planning can influence the outcome of a debate.			10-20 minutes

References and Additional Resources

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