How to Win a Debate
# Format

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<th>Team</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<td>Pro</td>
<td>Opening remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Con</td>
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<td>Rebuttal of Pro</td>
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<td>Con</td>
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Research and Know Your Topic

- Begin with appropriate chapter from text.
- Supplement with suggested readings at end of chapter.
- Identify and use other credible sources.
Opening Remarks: Formulate Persuasive Arguments

- Begin with 10 or more arguments that you believe are persuasive for your side.
- Winnow these down to the three arguments for your opening presentation and to use as running themes.
- “Best” in this context are arguments that can withstand criticism from opponents.
- Ask “if our opponents win, how will they accomplish it? If the audience votes against us, where will their reasoning begin?” Work backwards from answers to formulate your arguments.
Rebuttal: Anticipate Your Opponent’s Arguments

- Your opponent will have done what you’ve done in step 2. Anticipate their arguments.

- Prepare rebuttals to all possible arguments by your opponents, whether or not you think they are likely to be used.
  - Remember, they may try to do something unexpected.

- Focus on legitimate counter-arguments:
  - the empirical veracity of the premises
  - the deductive validity of the conclusions
Questions: Probe Your Opponent’s Weaknesses

- You get to raise uncomfortable issues designed to undermine their arguments.
- What are the greatest weaknesses in their case?
- Structure your questions to highlight these weaknesses.
- Aim for 1-3 pointed questions (1.5 minutes)
Answering Questions: Anticipate What Your Opponent Will Ask

- Your opponent will have just done step 4 as well. What are the most troublesome and vexing questions they are likely to ask you?
- Prepare a response that answers the question the best you can. Be succinct.
Closing Remarks

- Frame the central issue in the debate. Where do you and your opponent disagree?
- Repeat your most persuasive points that relate to this central disagreement.
- Address any lingering criticisms and questions.
- Highlight the primary weaknesses in your opponent’s argument.
- Do not try to win every issue or point. Focus on the relative strength of your arguments. Why are your arguments more important than theirs?
Key: Teamwork

- Have a strategic plan before the debate begins.
  - Know what you want to say and stick to the message.
- Establish roles for each member.
- Practice your presentation in front of each other. Support your team members through constructive criticism and suggestions.
  - Be kind, if for no other reason than you need an effective team.
Key: Preparation

- Opening remarks are highly structured and relatively easy to deliver.
- All other stages must be prepped in advance.
  - For each argument your opponent might make, prepare a separate sheet with that argument on the top and your rebuttal beneath.
  - For every question they might ask you, prepare a separate sheet with that question at the top and your answer beneath.
  - Redundancy is a virtue!
- Each speaker for the next phase should be “pulling” these sheets as the current speaker is addressing the audience and bring them to the podium.
  - Assistance is good, but ultimately each speaker must be in charge of his or her own remarks.
Feb. 21: Free trade hurts the working class in the United States

Abel, Cameron
Caesar, Sumner
Celeda, Nicola
Cha, Andrew
Guyer, Mary
Hillman, Christian
Hwang, Kevin
Ibarra, Anahi
Willard, Eric

Teaching Assistant:
Carcelli, Shannon

Teaching Apprentice:
Qin, Jesse
Feb. 24: Governments should negotiate with terrorist groups to resolve differences

Asker-Svedberg, Andrea
Attar, Natalie
Corrales, Juan
Huang, Andrew
Huynh, Pamela
Leeburg, Brian
McCaffrey, Alan
Paige, Nicole
Perez, Jocelyn

Teaching Assistant: Carcelli, Shannon
Teaching Apprentice: Alkass, David
Zhu, Rose
Feb. 26: The US should participate in the ICC

Bayardo-Bucardo, Luis
Cason, Amanda
Cruz, Annette
Day, Robert
Du, Sophie
McLeod, Jensen
Mireles Elizabeth
Pedri, Hannah
Pedro-avila, Sinnai

Teaching Assistant:
Merrell, Brandon
Teaching Apprentice:
Goldenberg, Emily
Feb. 28: Nuclear weapons make the world a safer place

Cruz, Victor
Durkee, John
Gravell, Lucas
Luthra, Advait
Morales, Kalvin
O'Loughlin, John
Oh, Jiwon
Stout-Blackman, Mason
Tsolmonkhuu, Melody Uyanga

Teaching Assistant: Merrell, Brandon
Teaching Apprentice: Fields, William
March 3: The United Nations should intervene in Syria

Bsaibes, Joe
Delgado, Anayeli
Gordillo, Alberto
Hampton, Quinlan
Horton, Jeremiah
Jamjoom, Maryam
Persons, Katherine
Sonboli, Maryam
Srivastava, Sagar

Teaching Assistant: Merrell, Brandon
Teaching Apprentice: Folsom, Jessica
March 5: The US should promote women's rights in countries where they are not now respected

Chen, Emily
Heath, Brittany
Lee, Michelle
Randolph, Cassondra
Ruckstuhl, Megan
Szwaykowski, Alexander
Ukrainetz, Madisyn
Voight, Alexandra
Wong-Toi, Joeanne

Teaching Assistant:
Merrell, Brandon

Teaching Apprentice:
Kim, Habyel
Emmrick, Rebecca
March 7: The US should unilaterally reduce its carbon emissions

Bright, Megan
Dang, Deanna
Gonzalez, Perla
Gyorffy, Cameron
Hidalgo, Rey
McCrary, Hannah
Mitchell, Kathleen
Neil, Amelia
Ramanarayanan, Kamakshi

Teaching Assistant:
Merrell, Brandon

Teaching Apprentice:
Johns, Amy
Banerjee, Shreya
March 10: The US should not intervene in foreign conflicts without UN approval

Beloff, Alexander
Chen, Yixian
Everingham, Dylan
Levin, Benjamin
Liu, Joseph
Morin, Wyatt
Shin, Michelle
Tran, Ian
Yoshihara, Motoyuki

Teaching Assistant:
Carcelli, Shannon

Teaching Apprentice:
Nadurata, Edward
Bagdassarian, Eugenia
March 12: China’s rising power is a threat to the US.

Chen, Jonathan
Choi, Cyn Hee
Han, Byoung Hoon
Ku, Yiyu
Li, Hounong
Miller, Tyler
Serna, Erik
Wood, Cooper
Zhang, Zheng

Teaching Assistant:
Carcelli, Shannon

Teaching Apprentice:
Strasser, Gabrielle
Chang, Irene
March 14: Developed countries have an obligation to provide aid to developing countries

Anatalio, Joshua
Hauss, Samuel
Nguyen, Diana
Nguyen, Luan
Pak, Jacequiline
Parfait, Audrey
Sun, Yi
Thai, Cindy
Vo, Allison

Teaching Assistant:
Carcelli, Shannon

Teaching Apprentice:
Sarkozi, Ashley
Tilfors, Emma