



# DebateFest Student Guide: How to Argue and Win

## *The Goal of DebateFest*

*Winning a debate is not about speaking the loudest or the longest. Winning is about presenting the strongest argument, supporting it with evidence, responding to opposing claims, and persuading the judge that your position is more reasonable and better supported.*

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## *The DebateFest Winning Formula*

**CLAIM + EVIDENCE + REASONING = STRONG ARGUMENT**

Every argument should answer three questions:

### **1. What do you believe? (Claim)**

State your position clearly.

**Example:**

*Schools should require financial literacy courses for all students.*

### **2. How do you know? (Evidence)**

Provide facts, statistics, research, expert opinions, or examples.

**Example:**

*According to the National Financial Educators Council, many young adults report entering adulthood without basic money-management skills.*

**3. Why does it matter? (Reasoning)**

*Explain how the evidence supports your claim.*

**Example:**

*Because students often make important financial decisions immediately after graduation, learning these skills in school better prepares them for adulthood.*

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## **The 5 Keys to Winning a Debate**

### **1. Know the Topic**

*Before the debate:*

- ✓ *Research both sides*
- ✓ *Understand key facts*
- ✓ *Learn important vocabulary*
- ✓ *Prepare examples*
- ✓ *Anticipate opposing arguments*

**Remember:** *The best debaters can argue either side because they understand the entire issue.*

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### **2. Organize Your Arguments**

*A strong argument follows this structure:*

**Point**

*State your main argument.*

## **Evidence**

*Provide proof.*

## **Explanation**

*Explain why the proof matters.*

## **Impact**

*Describe the result or consequence.*

### **Example:**

**Point:** *Schools should start later.*

**Evidence:** *Research shows teenagers need more sleep than adults.*

**Explanation:** *Early start times prevent students from getting adequate rest.*

**Impact:** *Better sleep improves attendance, academic performance, and student well-being.*

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## **3. Refute Opposing Arguments**

*Refutation is one of the most important skills in DebateFest.*

### **Step 1: Listen Carefully**

*Do not interrupt.*

### **Step 2: Identify the Weakness**

*Ask yourself:*

- *Is the evidence outdated?*
- *Is the claim exaggerated?*
- *Are they missing important information?*
- *Does their evidence actually support their point?*

### **Step 3: Respond Clearly**

**Example:** *My opponent argues that school uniforms improve discipline. However, the evidence presented only shows a correlation, not a direct cause. Many factors influence student behavior beyond clothing.*

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## **4. Use Evidence Effectively**

*Judges reward arguments supported by credible evidence.*

### **Strong Evidence Includes:**

- ✓ *Academic research*
- ✓ *Government reports*
- ✓ *Expert opinions*
- ✓ *Historical examples*
- ✓ *Reliable statistics*

### **Weak Evidence Includes:**

- ✗ *"I think"*
  - ✗ *"My friend said"*
  - ✗ *Unverified social media posts*
  - ✗ *Unsupported opinions*
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## **5. Stay Professional**

*Winning debaters demonstrate respect and confidence.*

### **Do:**

- ✓ *Speak clearly*
- ✓ *Make eye contact*
- ✓ *Stay calm*
- ✓ *Listen carefully*
- ✓ *Respect opponents*
- ✓ *Use professional language*

## **Don't:**

- ✗ Interrupt*
  - ✗ Yell*
  - ✗ Insult opponents*
  - ✗ Roll your eyes*
  - ✗ Become emotional*
  - ✗ Ignore opposing arguments*
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## **Cross-Examination Tips**

*When asking questions:*

### **Ask Questions That:**

- ✓ Clarify arguments*
- ✓ Reveal weaknesses*
- ✓ Expose missing evidence*
- ✓ Challenge assumptions*

### **Avoid Questions That:**

- ✗ Are rude*
- ✗ Can be answered with only "yes" or "no"*
- ✗ Waste time*
- ✗ Attack the person instead of the argument*

## **How Judges Decide Winners**

*Most DebateFest judges look for:*

### **Strong Arguments**

*Are claims logical and supported?*

### **Quality Evidence**

*Is the evidence credible and relevant?*

### **Refutation**

*Did the debater respond effectively to opposing arguments?*

### **Organization**

*Was the presentation easy to follow?*

### **Communication**

*Did the speaker present confidently and professionally?*

### **Impact**

*Did the debater explain why the issue matters?*

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## **Common Mistakes That Cost Points**

- ✗** *Reading directly from notes*
- ✗** *Making claims without evidence*
- ✗** *Ignoring opponent arguments*
- ✗** *Speaking too fast*
- ✗** *Going off topic*
- ✗** *Repeating the same point*
- ✗** *Attacking people instead of ideas*

## **Championship Closing Statement Formula**

*A strong closing should:*

### **1. Restate Your Position**

*Today we demonstrated that...*

## **2. Summarize Key Arguments**

*We proved three important points...*

## **3. Highlight Your Strongest Evidence**

*The evidence clearly showed...*

## **4. End With Impact**

*For these reasons, we respectfully urge the judge to support our position.*

# **DebateFest Champion Mindset**

*The best debaters:*

- *Prepare thoroughly.*
- *Listen actively.*
- *Think critically.*
- *Speak confidently.*
- *Respect others.*
- *Adapt quickly.*
- *Focus on evidence, not emotion.*

### **Remember:**

*A great debater does not simply talk more. A great debater proves more.*

*Claim it. Support it. Explain it. Defend it. Win it.*

**DebateFest Success Formula:**

**Research + Evidence + Logic + Refutation + Confidence = Victory 🏆**