



Effective Speaker Tips

How to Speak with Confidence and Persuade the Judge

Winning a DebateFest competition is not just about having good research—it is also about how effectively you communicate your ideas. Strong speakers make their arguments clear, convincing, and memorable.

Before You Speak

1. Know Your Main Points

Do not try to memorize every word.

Instead, know:

- *Your position*
- *Your strongest arguments*
- *Your key evidence*
- *Your rebuttals*

The best speakers sound natural, not scripted.

Remember:

Know your ideas, not just your notes.

2. Organize Your Thoughts

Before speaking, ask yourself:

- *What is my claim?*
- *What evidence supports it?*
- *Why does it matter?*

A clear structure helps judges follow your argument.

While You Are Speaking

3. Speak Clearly

Many students lose points because they speak too quickly.

Do:

- ✓ *Speak at a steady pace*
- ✓ *Pronounce words clearly*
- ✓ *Pause between major points*
- ✓ *Slow down when presenting evidence*

Avoid:

- ✗ *Mumbling*
 - ✗ *Rushing*
 - ✗ *Speaking too softly*
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4. Use the Power of Pauses

Great speakers pause for emphasis.

Example:

*"Research shows... (pause)
that students who receive financial literacy education are better prepared for
adulthood."*

Pauses help:

- *Judges understand your argument*
 - *You gather your thoughts*
 - *Important points stand out*
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5. Make Eye Contact

Look at:

- *The judge*
- *The audience*
- *Your opponents when responding*

Eye contact demonstrates confidence and credibility.

Avoid:

- ✗ *Looking at the floor*
 - ✗ *Looking only at your notes*
 - ✗ *Looking only at one person*
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6. Use Professional Body Language

Your body communicates before you speak.

Good Body Language

- ✓ *Stand tall*
- ✓ *Face the audience*
- ✓ *Use natural hand gestures*
- ✓ *Maintain good posture*

Poor Body Language

- ✗ Slouching
 - ✗ Fidgeting
 - ✗ Crossing arms
 - ✗ Pacing excessively
 - ✗ Constantly looking down
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Presenting Evidence Effectively

7. Introduce Your Evidence

Do not simply read statistics.

Instead:

Example

Weak:

"Thirty-five percent of students report financial stress."

Strong:

"According to a national study, thirty-five percent of students report financial stress, demonstrating why financial education is needed."

Always explain why the evidence matters.

8. Emphasize Important Facts

Use vocal emphasis on key words.

Example

*"This policy would affect **millions** of students across the country."*

Emphasis helps judges remember your strongest points.

Responding to Opponents

9. Listen Carefully

Many students spend so much time thinking about what they will say next that they stop listening.

Successful debaters:

- ✓ *Listen actively*
 - ✓ *Take notes*
 - ✓ *Identify weaknesses*
 - ✓ *Respond directly*
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10. Refute Respectfully

Challenge arguments—not people.

Say:

"My opponent's argument overlooks an important factor."

"The evidence presented does not fully support that conclusion."

Do Not Say:

- ✗ *"That's ridiculous."*
- ✗ *"You're wrong."*
- ✗ *Personal attacks*

Professionalism earns respect and points.

Handling Nerves

11. Take a Deep Breath Before Speaking

Everyone gets nervous.

Even experienced speakers feel nervous before presentations.

Before Speaking:

- *Sit up straight*
- *Take a slow breath*
- *Focus on your first sentence*

Once you begin speaking, confidence usually increases.

12. If You Make a Mistake, Keep Going

Do not panic.

Judges care more about your overall performance than a small mistake.

If You:

- *Mispronounce a word*
- *Lose your place*
- *Forget a point*

Simply continue.

Confidence often matters more than perfection.

Cross-Examination Tips

13. Ask Smart Questions

Good questions:

- ✓ *Clarify arguments*

- ✓ *Reveal weaknesses*
- ✓ *Challenge evidence*
- ✓ *Encourage opponents to explain*

Example:

"Can you explain how your evidence directly supports your conclusion?"

14. Answer Questions Directly

When responding:

1. *Answer the question.*
2. *Explain your reasoning.*
3. *Return to your main argument.*

Avoid long, confusing answers.

Closing Strong

15. Finish with Confidence

A strong closing statement should:

Restate Your Position

"Today we have shown that..."

Summarize Key Arguments

"Our evidence demonstrated three important points..."

End with Impact

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

Never end with:

"That's all." Finish with purpose.

The DebateFest Speaker Checklist

Before speaking, ask yourself:

- Am I speaking clearly?*
 - Am I making eye contact?*
 - Am I standing confidently?*
 - Am I using evidence?*
 - Am I explaining why the evidence matters?*
 - Am I listening to my opponent?*
 - Am I responding respectfully?*
 - Am I staying focused on my strongest arguments?*
 - Am I speaking at a reasonable pace?*
 - Am I helping the judge understand my position?*
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The DebateFest Speaker Formula

CONFIDENCE + CLARITY + EVIDENCE + PROFESSIONALISM = SUCCESS

Remember:

The most successful DebateFest speakers are not always the loudest or the fastest. They are the students who communicate their ideas clearly, support them with evidence, and persuade the judge through logic, confidence, and respect.

Speak Clearly. Think Critically. Defend Your Position. Win with Confidence. 🏆🎤