



DEBATE IT

STUDENTS GUIDE TO A CLASS DEBATE

This material is designed to introduce debating to students, in preparation for the Vanuatu School Debate (VSD). Rules and Criteria are simplified, and do not represent those of the VSD competition .

The VSD is an initiative of the Pacific Institute of Public Policy in association with the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training



DEBATE IT

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A DEBATE?

A debate is an argument - but with rules!

In a debate you are given a *motion* which is the topic you will be debating. You will be assigned to one side of the motion. You will either be arguing for the motion - the *affirmative*, or against the motion - the *negative*. You do not get to choose which side you argue for. You should instead look to find ideas you are passionate about that support your side of the argument. You will need to think creatively.

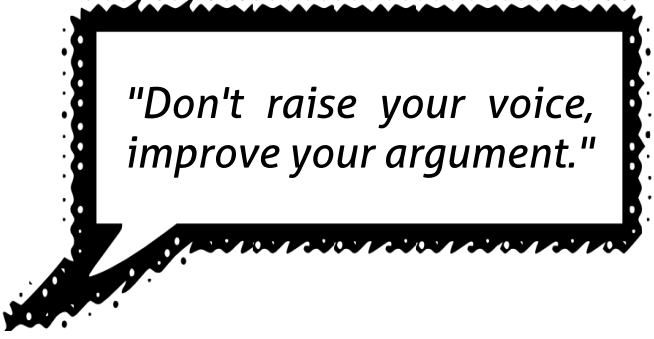
Your job as a speaker in a debate is to convince the audience and judges that your side of the argument is true. To make a great debate you must have strong points to support your own argument, presenting researched ideas in a way that is interesting and persuasive. You must also listen closely to your opposition's arguments, and explain to your audience why your arguments are stronger than theirs.

WHY DEBATE?

Debate can be seen in all aspects of life - not just in the classroom. Debate can be used in the home to negotiate arguments between family, in the *nakamal* to resolve community issues and even in Parliament to decide the future of the country.

Debate gives you the skills to be a leader; someone who can listen to all sides of an argument and make a rational decision based on the facts. It helps you to express your thoughts and ideas in a way that is respectful and truthful, and without having to yell or upset others.

Although you will be assigned one side of the argument in a debate, the greatest benefits come from understanding the complexity of the issue. There is no right and wrong in debate, and there will always be correct arguments on both sides. Debate is about assessing your opponents ideas, understanding them, and coming up with arguments that challenge them.



*"Don't raise your voice,
improve your argument."*

While a debate is a competition, the overall aim is not winning alone. Uncovering new personal skills and passions, challenging pre-existing ideas and discovering a range of new perspectives is all part of the debate process. Instead of aiming to win, strive to become a bold and creative thinker. Aim to develop the skills that will help you as a leader in the future - either in at home, community, work, or perhaps even one day in Parliament!

DEBATE IT

INTRODUCTION

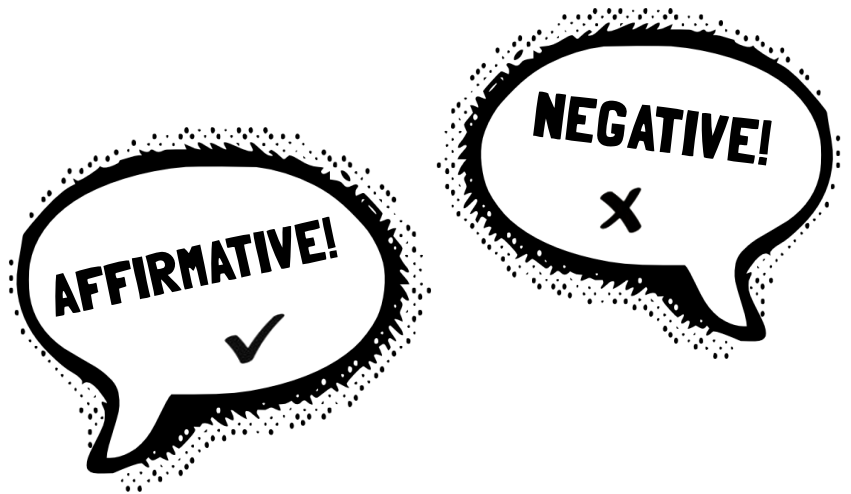
YOUR CLASSROOM DEBATE

For a debate you will need:

- 3 speakers for the affirmative
- 3 speakers for the negative
- 1 time keeper
- 1 chair - to introduce the debate
- 4 adjudicators (judges)
- An audience

And for equipment:

- One table for each team
- One table for the adjudicators
- A bell / drum/ pen
- A watch to keep time
- One Criteria sheet for each adjudicator



HOW DOES A DEBATE WORK?

A debate has a set structure that always stays the same.

Each debate starts with the chairperson introducing the topic, the teams and the rules of a debate.

The affirmative team will sit together to the left of the stage, and the negative team will sit to the right.

After being introduced, speakers will come up one at a time, starting with the first speaker for the affirmative. Each speaker will present their prepared arguments and rebuttal to the audience. While speakers are presenting the other team must remain silent and listen. Teams can take notes, and prepare their rebuttals, but must be respectful of the person talking.

The timekeeper will time each speaker's presentation and signal when the speaker has 1 minute left, 10 seconds left and when their time is up. The speaker should then wrap up their presentation.

The adjudicators will fill out the judging criteria during the debate, individually. At the end of the debate the adjudicators come together to decide who has won and who was the best speaker.

In the judging criteria there are three key components: **Matter, Method and Manner.**

DEBATE IT

A GOOD DEBATE

MATTER

Matter is the content of the speech. It is the topics and ideas that the speaker puts forward in their presentation. It is a crucial part of a debate, and requires preparation and understating of the issues.

Understanding the topic

To make a good debate you need to know what you are talking about. You should do plenty of research and preparation so that you are confident in what you are going to say.

To understand the topic clearly your team first needs to look at the motion and define the topic. This will set the guidelines for your debate, and keep your arguments relevant and on track.

How to define the topic:



1. SELECT: choose the key words from the topic .

Motion: There is no such thing as poverty in Vanuatu



2. INTERPRET: what do these definitions mean in the context of your motion. Look up their meanings in a range of dictionaries, choosing the most appropriate definition for each word.

Poverty: has lots of definitions. Relative poverty means that you are poor compared to somebody else - for example Vanuatu is poor compared to Australia because they make less money. Absolute poverty is set by a global definition of a person that earns under \$1.25 a day. If a person in Vanuatu earns less than \$1.25 a day does that make them poor? Even if they have a good garden with lots of food and clean drinking water? Make sure to choose the definition that will support your argument!

Vanuatu: make sure you include all of Vanuatu in your argument. You cannot talk only about the people from your island living happily off their garden. You must consider people who have moved to Port Vila, or families living on small remote islands in the Banks.



3. PRESENT: the first speaker should present the definitions of the key terms and explain what they mean in the context of your debate.

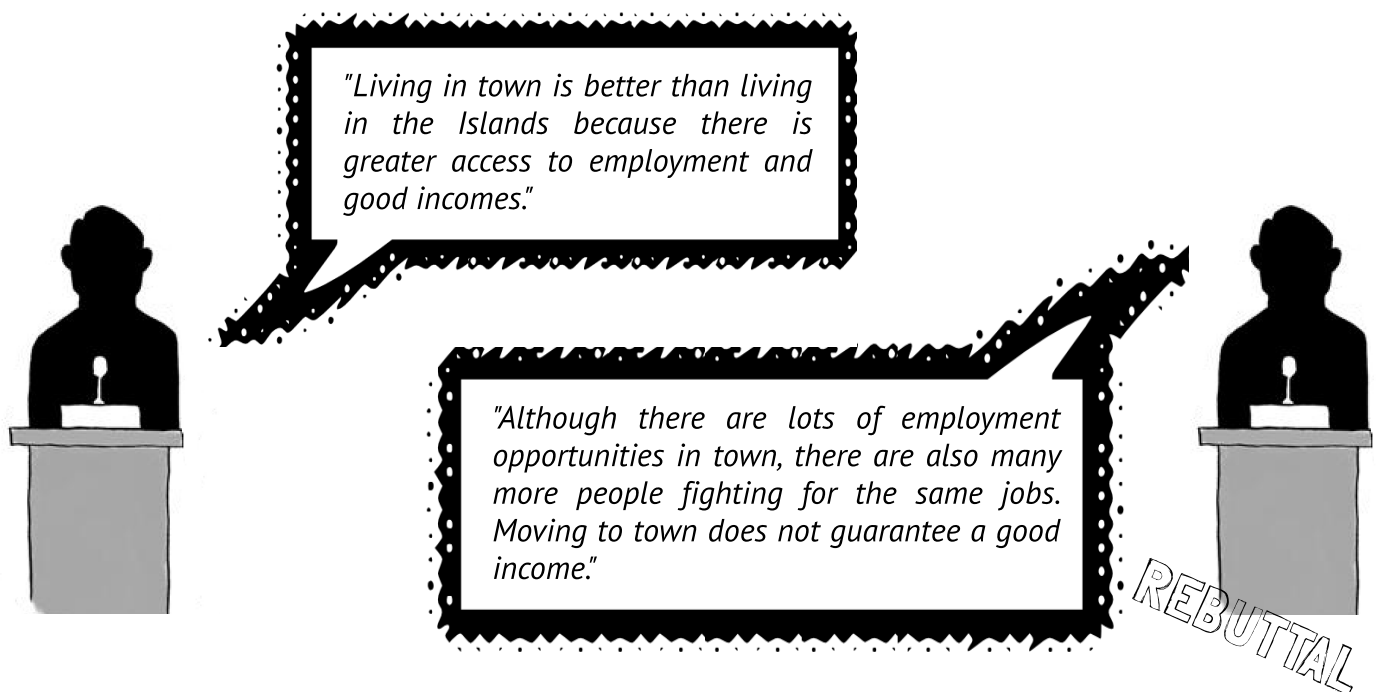
"As the affirmative team, we would like define poverty in terms of relative poverty. Although people may not have nice cars and high paying jobs, here in Vanuatu both in the islands and the majors towns, Ni-Vanuatu citizens have a good standard of living with access to good food and clean water. We will show to you why this means that there is no such thing as poverty in Vanuatu"

A GOOD DEBATE

Strong Rebuttal

A rebuttal is a response to your oppositions arguments. Persuading an audience means that debaters must explain both why their arguments are right, **as well as why their opponent's arguments are wrong.**

To rebut, students must listen to their opponents arguments and come up with reasons as to why these ideas should not be taken into consideration. It might be that their points are not in line with the motion at hand, that they are incorrect or not important. Speakers may take notes while the other team presents, and should include their rebuttal in their own argument. Here is an example:



Good Research

Providing evidence is an important way to demonstrate that your points are based on fact, and not just made up! In the preparation to your debate, gather research from a range of different sources. From your research you should gather examples and facts to strengthen your arguments. Make sure to put research into your own words. You can quote from studies or people, but remember: you want your audience to be interested. Lots of numbers and data or very high level material will be hard to follow, and will not be convincing. Choose research that supports your arguments and present it in your own words.

GOOD IDEA



Places to look for research are:

- Articles in newspapers or magazines
- Books
- Online reports and articles (check the date of publication - make sure its recent)
- Organisations, businesses or Government offices or websites
- Interviewing relevant people

A GOOD DEBATE

METHOD

Method is the structure and organisation of the speakers presentation. It requires each speaker to understand their role individually and within the team. Although speakers can also prepare individually, it is important that teams come together and work on their motion as a group.

Team Work

Debating is a team activity and each speaker must be considered in their team role as well as their individual role. A cohesive approach means that the speakers are more easily able to link their individual cases to the overall argument.

When preparing for your debate, you should come together as a group regularly to discuss your points and ideas. You should choose at the start who will speak first, second or third and allocate points to the first and second speaker. The third speaker needs to know the arguments so they can include them in their concluding summaries.

A team line can be a great way to enhance your debate. After collecting all your points, work out what is the most important overall idea that your team is focusing on. Then try and come up with a phrase that captures that idea. It should be a short catchy phrase that all speakers can add into their presentation, that the audience will remember once your presentation is done.

Teamwork also means the support and encouragement of your team mates. When preparing for a debate you should be respectful of your team mates' opinions. Work together to identify y

Timing

When presenting your argument, you need to ensure you stay within the given time of 3 minutes. Although this might sound like a long time to talk, it will actually go very quickly! You need to make sure you know what you are going to say, and in what order. Do not repeat the same things, or spend your whole 3 minutes defining the terms.

Going significantly over or under time will loose you points in the judging criteria.

A very short case will loose points for timing, and most likely will also loose points in Matter - as you have not presented many arguments or research.

An argument that is too long will loose points for timing, but the content will still be considered by the adjudicators.

GOOD IDEA



Before your debate, practice with your team and run through what you are to say so that you can be confident of your timing.

If your speech is too short, expand on some of your material; give examples, facts or a story that supports your point. If your speech is too long try to cut down on any repetitions or irrelevant material.

Don't forget to leave time to rebut!

A GOOD DEBATE

METHOD

Speaker Duties

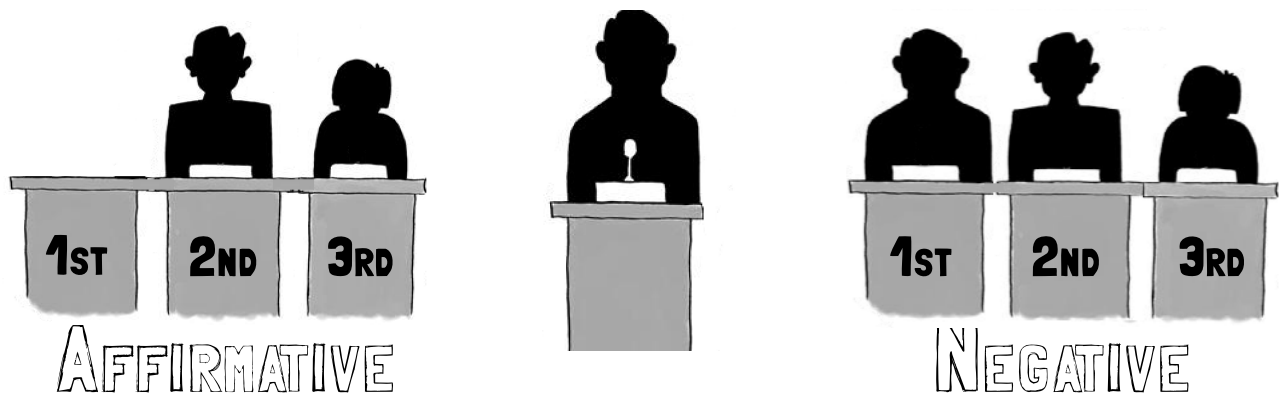
Each speaker has a different role to play in a debate. Make sure you understand your speaker duties before you start preparation for your debate.

FIRST SPEAKER: AFFIRMATIVE

- Defines the topic and key terms in the motion, identifies issues which will be discussed
- Presents their team and team line
- Presents arguments allocated to the first speaker
- No rebuttal

FIRST SPEAKER: NEGATIVE

- Identifies any disagreement about the definition, but does not redefine terms.
- Rebuts the affirmative arguments.
- Presents their team and team line
- Presents arguments allocated to the first speaker



SECOND SPEAKERS: AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE

- Rebuts major arguments
- Defends own case against rebuttal by previous speaker(s)
- Presents arguments allocated to second speaker

THIRD SPEAKERS (AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE)

- Presents an overview of the debate
- Identifies the essential issues upon which the teams disagree, rebuts the important aspects of the opposing team's case, and defends own team against attack.
- Summarises their own team's case
- Can also list recommendations (optional)
- IMPORTANT! the third speaker is not allowed to bring up new arguments. They can only summarise their previous speakers arguments and rebut.

A GOOD DEBATE

MANNER

Manner is the presentation style of the speech. When you present your arguments you need to talk in a confident, clear and engaging manner.

Body Language

Body language is very important when speaking to an audience. Interaction with the audience can be made in a number of ways. Eye contact is extremely important – make sure you are looking up constantly throughout your presentation. You should not be looking down, reading off the paper. Instead, practice your speech until you know it confidently. You can prepare cue cards with reminders to help you remember your points.

Speakers should be able to add to their case with gestures and express themselves with confidence and enthusiasm. Keep your audience interested!



GOOD IDEA

Don't write your full debate down. Instead keep notes short and succinct on small cards. Notes are a little reminder of what you want to say – a prompt only. Number each card so that if you drop them, you can sort them easily.

Vocal style

The greatest arguments in the world won't win you a debate if no one can hear them! Vocal style includes volume and pace, tone and clarity. Your case should be delivered clearly, so that the entire audience can hear. You should use the volume and pitch of your voice to add interest, and drive home important points. Language should be clear and well pronounced, at a rate that is not too fast so that the audience can easily follow.

GOOD IDEA

Try to remember these tips when presenting:



- Develop eye contact with the whole audience – don't just look at one person.
- Use your hands and body naturally to emphasize points.
- Speak clearly and loudly.
- Vary your voice pitch- make it sound interesting.
- Don't speak too quickly.
- Stand up straight – make sure you are not moving from foot to foot.
- Avoid slang – use good conversational English.
- For words that are hard to pronounce make sure to practise them.

DEBATE IT

CLASS RULES



- Speakers have **3 MINUTES*** each to present.
- The timekeeper should start the clock when **EACH SPEAKER STARTS**.
- When the speaker has **1 MINUTE LEFT**, the timekeeper **TAPS THE TABLE ONCE**.
- When the speaker has **10 SECONDS LEFT** the timekeeper taps the table **TWICE**.
- When the speaker has **0 TIME LEFT** (3 minutes finished) the timekeeper taps **THREE TIMES** and the speaker **MUST WRAP UP** their presentation.

* **NOTE:** 3 minutes is a suggested time only. Schools are free to adapt the rules as they see fit.

In the official Vanuatu School Debate competition speakers have 5 minutes each to present their case.



- Speakers may use **SMALL PALM CARDS** to remind them of their points
- Speakers may **NOT** write down their full speech and **READ FROM THE PAPER** - its boring to watch!



- Students are judged by **ADJUDICATORS**, who determine which team is the winner.
- Adjudicators have to fill out the **DEBATE CRITERIA** sheet for each speaker. They must complete this during the debate, **BY THEMSELVES**.
- At the end of the debate, all adjudicators come **TOGETHER** to make a decision. **THERE IS NO DRAW** - so adjudicators must work together to decide who has won.
- Adjudicators must present **REASONS** behind their choices, and provide constructive feedback.



- Speakers should be **RESPECTFUL** at all times and should not include personal remarks or be overly attacking in their arguments
- While a speaker is presenting, all other people present should be **QUIET** and **MAY NOT** ask questions or make comments.
- Speakers should use formal, language - **NO SLANG!**

DEBATE IT

CLASS JUDGING CRITERIA



AFFIRMATIVE



NEGATIVE

			NAME			
/10	/10	/10	Matter Understanding of topic, strong rebuttal good research	/10	/10	/10
/10	/10	/10	Method Team work, Timing, Speaker duties	/10	/10	/10
/10	/10	/10	Manner Vocal Style, Body language, Convincing	/10	/10	/10
			TOTAL			

DEBATE IT

CLASS JUDGING CRITERIA

EXAMPLE



AFFIRMATIVE



NEGATIVE

<i>John</i>	<i>Isa</i>	<i>Sam</i>	NAME	<i>Hiro</i>	<i>Mary</i>	<i>Sera</i>
<i>6</i> / 10	<i>9</i> / 10	<i>5</i> / 10	Matter Understanding of topic, strong rebuttal good research	<i>8</i> / 10	<i>10</i> / 10	<i>7</i> / 10
<i>4</i> / 10	<i>8</i> / 10	<i>7</i> / 10	Method Team work, Timing, Speaker duties	<i>6</i> / 10	<i>7</i> / 10	<i>6</i> / 10
<i>9</i> / 10	<i>10</i> / 10	<i>4</i> / 10	Manner Vocal Style, Body language, Convincing	<i>8</i> / 10	<i>9</i> / 10	<i>7</i> / 10
<i>19</i>	<i>27</i> ★	<i>16</i>	TOTAL	<i>22</i> ★	<i>26</i>	<i>20</i>

BEST SPEAKER

WINNING TEAM