

# DEBATE – SPRING 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

This document describes format of the debate we will use. This is a group debate where you are working in a team of 5-7 members to develop the case. Our debates have strong group coordination element which is an empowering opportunity for member kids to cultivate teamwork, leadership skills.

While participating in debates, you will be using a range of Toastmasters skills such as critical thinking, organizing your ideas for clear direction & message, emotional engagement while developing your message, thinking on your feet (skill we develop using table topics in Toastmasters meetings), active listening, etc.

Debates can help accelerate your learning curve with communication, leadership skills.

This is our home grown debate format. Over years, we have borrowed and integrated ideas from different sources, different types of debates being used in schools.

One of guiding principles in defining this debate format is to use and enhance skills we cultivate with the Toastmasters speaking program.

## DEBATE DEFINITION

Every week, we will publish debate statement and debate questions to set the stage for the preparation during the week. Students will get this on Sunday afternoon – that is, a week before the day of the debate.

## DEBATE STATEMENT

Our debate statement starts with “That...”

Examples...

That schools should have uniforms for students.

That reading a novel is a more complete experience than watching a movie based on that.

That government should ban GMO foods completely.

That government should provide healthcare to everyone.

That schools should allow social media for group projects collaboration.

That college players should be paid like pro athletes (like NBA, NFL, MLB, etc.).

That ice cream is good for teen agers.

That government should give financial incentives for using alternative energy.

That year round school schedule is better than traditional school schedule.

That hacktivists are a boon to our society.

Pro group - puts a case together in favor of the debate statement.

Con group - puts a case together to argue against the debate statement.

Each group develops the argument using collaboration, team work among the members.

## DEBATE QUESTIONS

Coaches will provide 3-4 questions to use during the debate.

The debate moderator will ask questions while running the debate.

## DEBATE PREPARATION, CASE STUDY DEVELOPMENT

Each group puts together case study for the debate during the week leading up to the debate on Sunday.

Every week, we will have a designated facilitator for your group. Role will rotate to different members every week. Facilitator will create and share Google Doc with his/her group members and also coaches for the debate.

Each group member will research topic and come up with ideas, points for the debate topic. Use your own personal experiences, stories, opinions with sound reasoning when topic allows for it. Also, site the sources of your research when you prepare. That will add credibility to your ideas.

Each member should bring printed copy of his/her group's case study to the class on Sunday.

## CASE STUDY: ARGUMENTS DEVELOPMENT

The case study for your group consists of arguments, each developed using AREI or PREP structure (explained next in this document):

Think about both sides of the argument, as while preparing for the debate during the week, you don't know which side you will be taking at the debate (Pro or Con). A good number can be five

developed arguments in favor of the debate statement, and five developed arguments against the debate statement.

About developing your arguments:

- Consolidate ideas from all members.
- Use debate questions as fuel to think of different arguments to be developed. However, keep in mind that a debate question can and probably should be answered combining different arguments. Any one developed argument may be relevant and useful for more than one question as well.
- Develop each argument using AREI or PREP structure as described in the following two sections.
- Put each argument in your Google Doc maybe on a separate page. Each member in the group can go in and add ideas for any of the arguments.
- Keep group focus on this during the week. It will help you be more effective at the debate.

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## **AREI: ASSERTION, REASONING, EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES, AND IMPACT**

AREI provides a way to form a complete argument and is comprised of four components – Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Impact.

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### **ASSERTION**

Assertion is a claim about the world, or a simple statement:

“Homework should be banned.”

“Poverty is harmful.”

“The United Nations should be reformed.”

An assertion itself is not an argument. It has no support, and so by itself, it’s basically nothing other than a baseless claim.

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### **REASONING**

Reasoning is the “because” part of the argument. Reasoning is essential to making arguments:

“Homework should be banned because it interferes with effective learning.”

“Poverty is harmful because when families are poor, they cannot regularly feed their children.”

“The United Nations should be reformed because it is not effective now.”

Adding reasoning to the assertion helps to make it an argument; however, it’s just an opinion and needs evidence to back the reasoning.

With group collaboration, there could be more than one reasoning for an assertion, that can come up while working on your group case study. That is fine, and even better, as you have perspective from more people and ammunition to develop the point at the debate. List all different reasons for the argument as bullet points. When you debate, you can draw on any of these in the list based on your flow and logic.

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## EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES

Evidence provides proof of your reasoning.

When the debate topic encourages you to bring up your personal opinion on a topic, use examples to substantiate your point.

Group collaboration can be very powerful in listing evidence, examples for each of the arguments.

Evidence/examples of why HW should be banned:

1. Students have to stay late at night, and their ability to focus in the class is compromised because of that.
2. Homework disrupts natural flow of learning which comes from passion from inside and not being dictated about what to do.
3. This study shows that when homework was not being used for a year at this school, the performance of students as measured by this criterion went up by 50%.
4. ... when you list points of evidence/examples like this, very easy for different group members to go in and add their ideas in it. It can save time, and make collaboration very solid.

Example list of evidence/examples for the argument that poverty is harmful:

Evidence/examples of why poverty is harmful:

1. When families are poor, they cannot regularly feed their children. For example, often poor families have to choose between paying their rent and buying food.
2. This study shows that for X percentage of people being under the poverty line, teen agers being pulled in to this harmful activity by 50%.
3. ... when you list points of evidence/examples like this, very easy for different group members to go in and add their ideas in it. It can save time, and make collaboration very solid.

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## IMPACT

Impact represents the “so what?” factor in an argument. How does your particular reasoning in your argument make any significant difference?

“Homework has a direct correlation with the performance of students, and in if allowed to continue, GPA scores will most certainly be negatively affected.”

“If we, as a people, ignore poverty conditions, we not only cause harm to the health of our citizens, but we will also lower our societal values that we hold so dear.”

“If we do not place a priority on reforming the United Nations, future peacekeeping will be negatively impacted. Imagine a world without a governing body such as the United Nations to hold nations to higher standards?”

This link also has nice description of AREI - <https://prezi.com/5-ix-ab1p7wf/success-in-debate-arei/>

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## PREP: POINT REASON EXAMPLE POINT

State your **point**.

Give **reasoning** for that.

Substantiate with **example(s)**.

Conclude with your **point**.

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## ILLUSTRATION OF PREP 😊

I think eating ice cream is the best idea over. (**P**oint)

It is so good for you. (**R**eason)

**E**xamples...

For example, ice cream is providing one of the most essential ingredient – sugar. Did you know our brain can use only sugar as fuel?

(Another example) Ice cream perks me up. My mood is so much better; it makes me more friendly, I don't fight as much with my siblings. That in turn helps my parents keep their blood pressure under control.

(Another example) I love how it tastes. In particular, a bucket of cookies and cream brings heaven on this earth for me.

(Another example) Ice cream can cut down total health care cost of our country. Ice cream energizes you and cuts down your stress. According to [this in-depth case study paper published in the Journal of American Medical Association \(JAMA\)](#), stress is number one cause for [so many diseases and infections](#).

I love ice cream. It is the best thing ever happened to us, as it has so many benefits. Eating ice cream is the best idea ever. (ending it again with the **p**oint).

PREP: Point – Reason – Example(s) - Point

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#### NOTE ON USING AREI AND PREP

You can use these AREI and PREP techniques for two different purposes:

1. To develop, document your arguments for the case study, like the way it is explained in previous two sections. This will help you organize, compile, consolidate ideas cutting down your prep time outside the classes.
2. When you stand up and speak, you can use the same formula for articulating your point as well. This is the way we use it in toastmasters, and some other debate formats that might have used in the school. Here you develop a clear point tapping into foundational preparation work you have done for the case study.

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#### ABOUT GROUP PREPARATION AT HOME DURING THE WEEK

Please note that all you need for case study preparation at home is your list of arguments, each developed in detail using AREI or PREP structure.



Coaches aren't expecting you to develop specific answers to the questions of the debate. Focus on developing arguments, it will naturally enable you to answer the questions. Trust your prep, trust your teamwork on this.

Coaches will look for developed arguments during the week leading up to the day of debate.

## DEBATE FLOW

The two groups will be facing audience at the time of debate – they will sit on two sides of the speaking area in the center.

Every time that a speaker stands up to make a statement, he/she will stand in the speaking area in the center.

Moderator will be sitting in front of both the sides, communicating with directly to run the debate.

For our regular classes, coaches will be the audience.

For family event, family and friends will be the audience.

As a debater, you will be looking at your audience and moderator during the debate (and not to the other group). Your task isn't to convince the other side, but your audience.

Avoid trying to beat the hack out of the other group by arguing with them directly. For one, your goal isn't to convince them, it is to convince your audience. Two, it can distract you from your strong reasoning. Use emotions, passion to convince your audience; your success hinges on how credible you come across to them (people in audience).

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## YOUR SIDE FOR THE DEBATE

The debate moderator will flip the coin to assign side for your group. Use the case study developed during the week to argue on your assigned side – Pro or Con.

While preparing for the case study during the week, you are preparing arguments for the both sides. On the day of the debate, in the class you get assigned to either Pro side or the Con side.

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## DIFFERENT ROLES AT THE DEBATE

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### OPENING STATEMENT

Sets the stage for your debate.

One recommendation – summarize each of your key arguments using your prepared case study. This sets the stage for other members in your group to expand, zoom in on different parts of it when they develop answers for different questions.

Develop it as a clear message with opening, main body, and conclusion. The AREI and PREP techniques can be used here as well to develop your statement. The examples or evidence part of the structure can/should combine ideas from one or more arguments that you developed in your case study.

Time: 2-3 min

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### QUESTION ONE

Develop answer for the question using arguments developed in your case study.

Develop it as a clear message with opening, main body, and conclusion. The AREI and PREP techniques can be used here as well to develop your statement. The examples or evidence part of the structure can/should combine ideas from one or more arguments that you developed in your case study.

Time: 2-3 min

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### QUESTION TWO

Develop it as a clear message with opening, main body, and conclusion. The AREI and PREP techniques can be used here as well to develop your statement. The examples or evidence part of the structure can/should combine ideas from one or more arguments that you developed in your case study.

Time 2-3 min

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### QUESTION THREE

Develop it as a clear message with opening, main body, and conclusion. The AREI and PREP techniques can be used here as well to develop your statement. The examples or evidence part of the structure can/should combine ideas from one or more arguments that you developed in your case study.

Time 2-3 min

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### QUESTION FOUR (IF PROVIDED)

Develop it as a clear message with opening, main body, and conclusion. The AREI and PREP techniques can be used here as well to develop your statement. The examples or evidence part of the structure can/should combine ideas from one or more arguments that you developed in your case study.

Time 2-3 min

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## POI: POINTS OF INFORMATION

During this part of the debate, each group will have opportunity to ask questions to the moderator about specific data points, arguments developed by the other group.

In cases where moderator thinks the question is valid, he/she can prompt other side to answer the question. In case if moderator doesn't see relevance or value in the question asked, he/she can decide not to use debate time for it and simply prompt for the next question.

Both groups (sides) of debate will get opportunity to bring up POI.

When you bring up a POI, you are standing where you are, and you are looking at the moderator to ask question.

Keep this in mind, it's not necessarily about how many questions that you ask, but the quality of your questions. Sometimes, asking just one question can help you convince the audience on your side, if it is a credible & insightful question.

Total time budget for POI will be 5-7 min.

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## REBUTTAL

During the debate each group member should listen to the arguments from the other side, write down notes using our tool, and develop specific points to rebut arguments of other side.

While doing rebuttal, speaker needs to site specific arguments from other side and develop counter argument.

Note that rebuttal is designed not to repeat points of your own side; it is meant specifically to develop counter arguments for what you captured from the other side. This is in a way combining your table topic skills and also evaluation skills. When any one of the coaches, or moderator thinks that you are using rebuttal to repeat your own points rather than countering points from the other side, he/she will interrupt you in middle of that point reminding the aim and objective with the rebuttal.

Very careful listening, notes taking, critical thinking and stringing together ideas are keys to an effective rebuttal.

Think of rebuttal as a speech that simply strings together number of counter arguments that you develop, one at a time.

Coaches might decide to have two people participate in rebuttal. In that case you divide the number of counter arguments in half and develop rebuttal as a team of two. You can either switch after each counter, or have one person do half of the counters and then the other person.

Time 3-5 min

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## SPARKS

After the rebuttal, if any of the members have very specific points to express that he/she thinks can help reinforce case for his/her group, moderator will allow 30 second sparks. During that time, you have opportunity to develop quick takeaways, specific points in up to 30 seconds.

Just as in all other parts of the debate, you are looking at your audience, talking to your audience to convince them on your side of the argument.

Moderator will switch between two sides for the sparks.

Time for each spark – up to 30 seconds

Moderator's total time budget for this – up to 5 min

Quality matters more than quantity with sparks. Even if you have only one or two things to add with sparks, it can help tilt the balance in favor of your group. On the other hand, when you try to use numerous sparks opportunities without clear points, more speaking actually can dilute your case.

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## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In the concluding statement, reinforce the key arguments of your side.

Develop it as a speech with its own opening, main body and a note to end it with maximum impact.

Time 2-3 min

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## NOTES ON ROLE PLAYING

- Roles will rotate every week, so every member gets chance to participate in all the roles over course of the session.

- When a member doesn't use up all her/his time budget, totally ok for others in the group to add. For example, for a 2-3 min slot, if a speaker uses only one minute, another member from the group can add to it to use remaining time budget. However, goal should be for first speaker to use the given budget.
- Sequence to be used by moderator during the debate

Pro side, Con side

Con side, Pro side

Pro side, Con side,

Con side, Pro side

...

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## TOOL TO TAKE NOTES DURING THE DEBATE

Print copy of our [tool to write down notes, take it to the meeting \(this is link to the tool\)](#). Bring new copy to your debate every week.

Deven will revise it a little bit and update the link.

## DEBATE MODERATOR

Debate moderator will conduct the debate from beginning to the end. The role of debate moderator will also be played by one of the members. The role of debate moderator will change from week to week.

- Moderator should do his/her homework on the debate topic. Understand the topic and questions you will be asking, research the topic.
- Try to be at the meeting 5 min before the start time.
- Think about the flow of the debate.
- As a debate moderator, this your show. Act like that. Seize the reins.
- Debate moderator should be a very good listener. Listen carefully.
- Try to take notes for key points as they come up. Over duration of the debate, it can turn in to a nice container of all ideas that come up during the debate.
- Totally ok to have transition from one side to the other with a comment if/when you think of an opportunity. One technique is to summarize key points that you captured from the speaker. Or, if a new idea came up first time in debate, point that out.
- You are neutral as a debate moderator – avoid identifying or agreeing with either side even if you have an opinion leaning towards one of the sides.

- Think critically – it is very important for the debate moderator. If a speaker brings up ideas not directly relevant to debate topic, let him/her know.
- You are in control of the debate. At the same time, encourage speakers to open up, share idea. Make them feel comfortable with an encouraging, supporting attitude.
- Have fun. Keep a smiley outlook.
- Debate moderator is also the timer, and enforces timings for all speakers.

## CASE FOR THE TEAMWORK

Be open to ideas from other members in your group. Remember that when someone else on your side is thinking differently, there is opportunity to broaden your perspective, and that way make you case even stronger.

Help each other. Be there for each other.

Avoid arguing with your group member during the debate, it can only hurt you. You can and should provide ideas that would make your group's case even stronger, do that will aim to support, enhance your groupie. Make fellow group member shine for his/her part, it will make your group's case even stronger.

Be accountable to your group. Missing in action during the week is a no-no.

Plan ahead, think ahead, communicate, coordinate with your group members during the week.

Be there for each other during the preparation, and then also at the debate.

Remember - your group's case is presented as well as the person speaking the moment develops it.

Learn synergy - **help each other** - bring all group members along.

## USE YOUR TOASTMASTERS SKILLS

1. Practice your Toastmaster Skills
  - a. Pause
  - b. Vocal Variety
  - c. Emotions
  - d. Storytelling
  - e. Avoid using filler words, we will use clicker for support
  - f. Strong projection



2. Be Clear and Concise
  - a. Do not start your sentence with 'SO'
  - b. Use your time carefully
3. Show, act energy when you speak. Your feeling follows your action, start showing & using energy, you will feel more energy from inside. Your passion comes through and audience will receive and connect with your message more effectively.
4. Listen carefully to arguments of the other group. Take copious amount of notes. These two things will do wonders to your effectiveness. Remember how did it with our toastmasters evaluations. You are using the same skill here.

## FEEDBACK FROM COACHES

Each coach at the meeting will listen to the debate, and give his/her opinion on which group of the two made a more convincing appeal on him/her, and why.

Coaches will have feedback for each group as well as to what they liked, where they saw opportunity for improvement ...etc.

Coaches will give feedback to each member as well.

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## WHAT COACHES WILL LOOK FOR

- Was there strong enough preparation, homework on the topic?
- Did the speaker think critically and articulated the idea(s) effectively?
- Did speaker think on his/her feet to tap into all ideas and develop point(s) comprehensively?
- Did speaker show energy, vocal variety, body language while speaking?
- Did member listen effectively, and use it to advantage of his/her group?
- Did the group show team work in developing this together as a group?
- Did speaker simply read notes, or actually delivered emphatic speech on topic at hand? (totally ok to use notes, but still develop the ideas in your own words)
- Did speaker avoid using filler words?
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY: Did you prepare as a group, or just individuals?**

## QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE PAST

**Q. With debate, does student get to choose whether to be on the pro or con side of the debate?**

**A.** It is decided by the coin flip. You should prepare case study such that you can argue on either side of the debate.

**Q. What if you feel strongly in favor of the other side? For example, while you are on the con side for that week, and your personal opinions, inclination is towards the pro side. What do you do in that case?**

**A.** You still learn how to develop case for your assigned side. We are learning how to do research, how to develop points, and how to work as a group. You can still develop all these skills while debating on the side you are assigned. After all, we are here to learn how to communicate. Debate uses critical thinking, impromptu integration of ideas (like table topics), effective listening, team work, planning/coordination for preparation, etc. Those are very powerful skills to develop.

Also, keep in mind that the debate topic changes from one week to the other.

**Q. What if you don't agree with points developed by your teammates?**

**A.** If you have new info, inputs ... or a different angle to develop case for your team, share it with your teammates. Explain to them. But, all of this has to happen during the week (before Sunday's debate) leading up to the debate. *At the debate (while doing it in the class), your goal is to help your team members. We avoid conflicting with them while in middle of the debate.* Your goal is to develop a convincing point as a group, and not just individually. At the debate, you are there to support your team mates, help them, encourage them, cooperate with them.

Also, in cases when you feel conflicted and not able to convince others in your group, focus on your assigned part (question), do well on that to support your team with powerful delivery (speech). Be a good listener during the debate, think critically, capture other points that can help your team as well, give it to them. They are your friends; we are all are friends.

Again, topics change every week, so it's not like you are stuck on a topic and side forever.



**Q. How are the debate groups formed? Can I make my own debate group?**

A. Coaches decide the groups at the beginning of the session. The goal is to keep groups evenly balanced.

We mix age group; each group typically will have members with different age. This creates opportunities for elder kids in group for example to develop more leadership skills taking newcomers to debate in their wings (guiding them, helping them, etc.). Younger kids get to see and learn from more experienced members as well. Given where we are right now with membership and coaching bandwidth, we do it this way right now. It can evolve/change in the future.

**Note:** Helping each other in your group, supporting others, making new friends, cultivating patience to work in team is a key to success here. This is also a very powerful skill to develop not just for the debate, but also for other activities at the school. When you go to college and in your professional career after that, this one skill can make a huge difference to your success.

**Q. As a parent, what if I don't like the position my son/daughter has to take for a particular debate?**

Let one of the coaches know about it. Please keep in mind though there might not be much he/she can do during that week to change it. It does help when you share your concern about the topic (for future programming, and potentially follow up comments/feedback to member kids/families after the debate).

Toastmasters is all about learning how to communicate. Normally, kids come up with the ideas and topics and content, coaches are there simply to help them develop the point effectively (whatever that point might be.) The program isn't about shaping/altering opinions or belief system. We try to align the structure and plan with [overall theme we have on our website home page](#).

With debates, however, we (coaches) need to define the debate statement and questions to set the turf for kids to prepare and debate, and most importantly HAVE FUN.

We (coaches) try to come up with topics that kids would enjoy, we ask them about topics ideas as well.

Topics should also be debatable; that is, there are two sides to it. There could and should be arguments on both sides of the topic to make topic easy to debate.

In the past we have had an instance or two where a parent thought debate topic was controversial (and not appropriate for their son/daughter to debate). We (coaches) put good amount of thought into it, and overall try to keep it balanced. Please trust coaches on this.

**Q. Can parents suggest ideas for debate topics?**

Absolutely. Welcome to the club... 😊

Yes, please bring up your ideas for topics. Share them by all means. We welcome ideas. We do listen to all ideas, even if we aren't able to use/implement every one of them.

We have got so many good ideas and nuggets from parents over time. Parents' support is priceless. We deeply appreciate all that parents do.