

INSTITUTE OF IDEAS
**DEBATING
MATTERS
COMPETITION**



INTRODUCING THE DEBATING MATTERS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

This pack is a practical resource designed to support teachers who want to introduce formal debating in their school. It is divided into two sections. The first section offers straightforward advice on setting up a debate club in school. The second section provides further detail on the format of the Institute of Ideas Debating Matters Competition, the acclaimed national schools' debating competition. Please do get in touch with the team if you would like to discuss setting something up, or would like any advice related to this pack.

We hope you find it helpful.

www.debatingmatters.com
020 7269 9233

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I. INTRODUCING DEBATING

DEBATING MATTERS – THE ETHOS

The Institute of Ideas has run the Debating Matters Competition since 2002. From its inception, Debating Matters has championed a different approach to schools debating, one where substance is emphasised over style, and young people are taken seriously. Interaction, and a critical engagement with both the topics and one another, lie at the heart of the competition's format and offer students a unique intellectual challenge. Students are required to conduct in-depth research, to examine the merits of competing perspectives in a debate and to question their own viewpoints. There is no false flattery in the Debating Matters Competition, rather, through a dynamic interaction with the judging panel and the audience during debates, students are held to account on their arguments, challenged to substantiate their case and encouraged to delve deeper in to key contemporary questions. Students are applauded for their successes and critiqued for their weaknesses. In the words of former participant, Sam Burt: *“Debating Matters is a short, sharp shock that can jolt smart young things out of their complacency and onto a more rewarding path of independent thought.”* For further details on the format see section 2.



DEBATING MATTERS MOTION: SOCIAL MEDIA IS REJUVENATING POLITICAL PROTEST

TEACHERS TALKING

“WHAT YOUNGER STUDENTS REALLY NEED IS A CLEAR FOCUS”

Tom Finn-Kelcey, Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School, Faversham

“What younger students really need is a clear focus, which is why I start them off on the Debating Matters topic guides and format straight away. Debates on **animal experimentation, competitive sport, film and videogame censorship** have been big hits with this age group. Even if the students don’t grasp the deeper philosophical arguments in these debates, they have plenty of concrete, factual material to work with”.

“EACH DEBATER HAS AT LEAST A WEEK TO PREPARE”

Ben Morse, Assistant Head of Sixth Form, The Piggott School, Reading

“Every season we run a few meetings, getting interested students together. I give them a list of issues and tell them to prepare and perform a one minute speech arguing passionately for, or against. The list changes each year and has a mixture of serious and silly topics – from abortions to Marmite. This is a nice gentle lead in, can give everyone some laughs and allows you to gauge strengths and weaknesses. After that, we pick our motions which are always DM motions. Each debater has at least a week to prepare, and posters are put up to advertise when and where”.

“THE SCHOOL HAS NEVER HAD A DEBATING CLUB BEFORE”

Meg Franklin, Teacher, William Ellis School, London

“I started at my school in September and quickly set up a debating club. The school has never had a debating club before, so I knew that I would have to publicise it well. I started by getting my Sixth Form Politics students interested and found that they were happy to help organise it. I have had good levels of participation, but I still want to get greater numbers attending, especially from younger years. It’s great to see the boys enjoying it though; arguing, disagreeing, airing their opinions and, generally, getting to grips with some relevant and interesting topics”.

“I STARTED SMALL WITH A CLUB THAT LOOKED AT THE BIG TOPICS IN THE NEWS”

Ben Harding, Head of Sixth Form, Beckfoot School, Bradford

“I started small with a club that looked at the big topics in the news. It was a talking shop that allowed them to listen and express ideas. One initial barrier for some of our students was just the stigma attached to debating and debate clubs, and so we kept it very informal. When we got the topics right the classroom was packed and there was a real buzz to the sessions. The students that started that group in Year 7 are now the Year 13s that have just qualified for the Debating Matters national final, and the seeds that we sowed early on have been key to their later drive and enthusiasm”.

GETTING DEBATE STARTED IN SCHOOL – SOME VITAL INGREDIENTS

DEBATING IS ALREADY HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL – USE IT TO IDENTIFY INTERESTED STUDENTS

There's already plenty of discussion and debate going on in the classroom, with many subjects featuring structured discussion. From your own classroom experience you may already have a 'wish list' of students you would like to attend the debate club – ask them personally to take part. You should also elicit recommendations from teaching colleagues, asking for suggestions about the liveliest and most thoughtful students in their classes.

WHO SHOULD DEBATE?

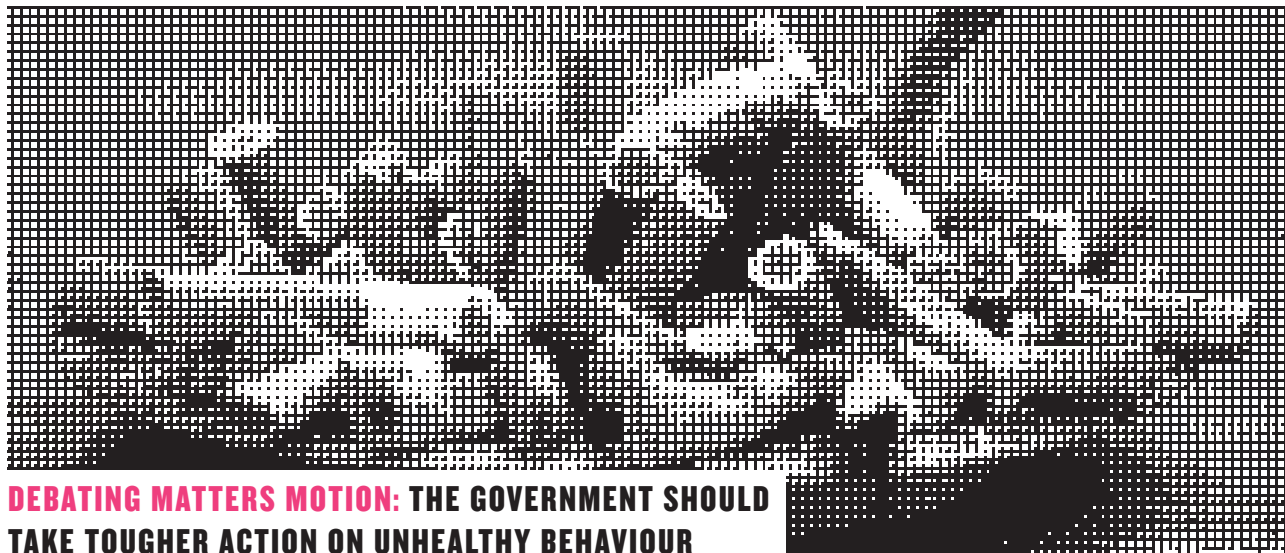
Debating Matters is a Sixth Form competition, and there is no doubt that this kind of debate is most suited to Sixth Formers. They have the skills and experience of thinking and learning that enable them to tackle the challenges and sometimes controversial topics most maturely, and Debating Matters in turn develops them. However, good GCSE students are more than capable of undertaking the same kind of events, although their arguments may not be as sophisticated. Younger pupils can also gain a great deal from less formal activities, and we know many teachers who have organised successful events catering for younger age groups.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER (THIS MEANS YOU!)

Students can need a lot of encouragement and support, both with the logistics and with all aspects of conducting a successful debate. Teachers act as motivators, guides to the research process, critical audience for developing speeches, organisers and trouble-shooters. Debating can also be student-led, but will need the over-arching support of a teacher. A strong teacher makes all the difference, and many of them tell us that Debating Matters is one of the most rewarding things they do.

GATHERING SUPPORT

Teachers often act alone, but it is worth acquiring as much support as you can. Involve other teachers; get Senior Management backing and interest, perhaps by inviting them to participate as judges; seek funding for refreshments, printing, transport, and events.



DEBATING MATTERS MOTION: THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE TOUGHER ACTION ON UNHEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

WHAT TO SET UP – A PROGRAMME FOR DEBATE

The key to getting debate activities going in schools are you, the teacher, an excited bunch of students and some lively issues to debate. Below are some tips and suggestions for a debate programme, to help you along in the process. These points aren't prescriptive, but are taken from the experiences of teachers we work with at Debating Matters who have started debate activities up at their school from scratch. Feel free to borrow what you like!

■ PROGRAMME WEEK 1: SETTING UP YOUR DEBATE GROUP

- Identify your 'debate club committee'
- Set up a first meeting
- Agree a programme for the term, with a key aim for the end of term. e.g. a live formal debate
- Watch the Debating Matters promotional video [here](#)

ACTION POINT: IDENTIFY STUDENTS WHO YOU THINK WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE ON BOARD AND MAKE THEM PART OF THE COMMITTEE

While publicity is very important in drawing in a self-selecting audience, momentum around the group will grow if you have some enthusiastic students on side who can then recommend and promote the group to their friends. Many teachers we have spoken to suggest that having an initial group of students committed to the cause helped build their activities enormously.

■ TEACHER TIP:

"Give pupils ownership of when debates are (give them a few dates to choose from) and have them on different evenings – this encourages others to come and check it out."

ACTION POINT: A REGULAR GROUP

As a minimum, a regular (perhaps weekly) group is essential to establish and sustain momentum, and can be quite informal initially. Identify a suitable time, meeting place, and who will be invited to participate. A Sixth Form debating group is ideal, but your own circumstances will dictate what is appropriate, and teachers have used all kinds of ideas to get lively debate happening in their schools.

■ TEACHER TIP:

"There is nothing like the competitive instinct to motivate students. We found that entering a competition early on provides a focus for the debate club."

ACTION POINT: WATCH THE DEBATING MATTERS FILM

The ‘Why Debating Matters’ film is a five minute promotional film for the Debating Matters Competition. Its usefulness in setting up a debate club or group is fairly straightforward – through a series of interviews and clips it attempts to convey what students, teachers and judges get out of debating the big issues of the day in a lively and engaged way. See [here](#)

TEACHER TIP:

“Choose a group of students that you would like to work with. Their involvement will not only encourage others to attend (far more so than notes in registers etc.) but will also encourage them to take responsibility for its success.”

PROGRAMME WEEKS 2-3: RESPONDING TO ARGUMENTS

- Get your group to create reasoned responses to provocative and controversial arguments, whether they take them from video pieces or articles

ACTION POINT: GET STUDENTS TO RESPOND TO A CONTROVERSIAL OPINION

Students can get worked up very easily! In organising debate activities in school you should make use of this propensity, but also work out ways to challenge your group’s prejudices – that is to expose their ideas about the world to research and rational debate. One way to do this might be to find an article written by a ‘provocative writer’ and get them to discuss it. For example, TV historian David Starkey was pilloried last year for his comments about the London riots, and branded a racist, but might some of what he said be worthwhile discussing? Or should he have been banned from saying it, as some suggested in the aftermath? Related to this, are there some things that people just shouldn’t be allowed to say? Or is free expression absolute, no ifs or buts? Play a clip of the discussion and get students to respond, asking plenty of questions that will challenge their assumptions, see [here](#). Alternatively, you might play a clip of someone putting forward a more mainstream position in a current debate, and then ask students to critique their arguments. As an example see a Newsnight discussion between Hugh Grant and Jeremy Paxman on press regulation after the Leveson Inquiry, see [here](#).

TEACHER TIP:

“I always go on the Today programme and the headlines from the BBC website to identify some good stimulus material. I also use “The Week” as it has good one page summaries of topics that can then be used to develop a debate.”

■ PROGRAMME WEEKS 4-6: GET DEBATING

- Invite different members of the club to go head-to-head on an issue in each week
- Decide on topics in advance and give them some materials to use in their preparation
- On the day students would give 3-5 minute introductions and then the discussion should be opened up to points from other members of the club
- Develop the formality of the debate so that it leads naturally into the programme for weeks 7&8

ACTION POINT: SELECT LIVELY TOPICS

As debating develops, more complex or nuanced issues can be addressed, where there needs to be sophisticated analysis and discussion. More formal speeches and structured debates can be developed when everyone is comfortable with the principles. It is worth building on students' own interests in the selection of topics, but the Debating Matters website has a large library of suggested topics and supporting material called Topic Guides. Our experience has shown that students tend to do more thinking, researching and reflecting on issues that are more removed from their own experience. See [here](#).

■ TEACHER TIP:

“It sometimes works to have a few more familiar topics at the beginning e.g. abortion, euthanasia. I’ve found that the students love to do topics they are doing in RE, ethical issues they already know about.”



DEBATING MATTERS MOTION: CELEBRITIES SHOULD KEEP OUT OF POLITICS

■ PROGRAMME WEEK 7: WATCH DEBATING MATTERS IN ACTION

- Watch one of the debates filmed at the Debating Matters National Final, to see how the format works in the formal competition. See [here](#)
- Organise a discussion afterwards, commenting on team performances and arguments used

ACTION POINT: WATCH AND CRITIQUE

Debating Matters now has a growing archive of filmed debates, all taken from one or other of our National Finals over the years. The quality of debate is generally high at this stage of the competition, so don't be put off by impressive arguments – all of those students got to these debates through hard work and plenty of arguments along the way. What watching these films can help to develop is an atmosphere of critical engagement with one another and current affairs issues more broadly. Seeing judging panels in action, and debaters' responses to them, can also help students prepare for the challenge of the real thing.

■ PROGRAMME WEEKS 8-9: TRYING THE DEBATING MATTERS FORMATS

- Set a date for a formal debate
- Decide on topics a few weeks before if possible
- Encourage preparation, preparation, and more preparation (if using Topic Guides tell students to read everything in the essential reading section – twice!)
- Choose colleagues who you think will do a good job of putting students through their paces as judges of the debates. A profile of a good judge can be found in section 2

ACTION POINT: TRY THE DEBATING MATTERS FORMAT OUT

Organising a lunchtime or after-school debate, with speakers, judges and an audience – all of whom can be found within your school – will bring the idea to life and might help to recruit new members to your club. This will involve some organisation but would help you to galvanise support. Advice for organising a Debating Matters debate can be found in section 2. Importantly you are now including others in the debate club, so will need to make sure that students are ready to do the club proud! Again, arming them with plenty of research material is key to this.

■ TEACHER TIP:

“Economics debate? Get an economics teacher to judge. A) it ropes in other staff, who may then want to come to more, and B) subject experts will be able to push pupils further. Also, bring governors in as judges – they love it, and it makes the kids rise to the occasion.”

■ PROGRAMME WEEK 10: COMPETITION AND DEBATING OTHER SCHOOLS

- Sign up to take part in the Debating Matters Competition
- Contact Debating Matters for recommendations of local school teams/clubs you could invite to debate your own school
- Get in contact with the Debating Matters team to let us know how it went

ACTION POINT: ENTER THE DEBATING MATTERS COMPETITION

You may find very early on that your students want to enter the Debating Matters competition – the competitive urge is very strong! This should be encouraged, and you might, for example, want to ask one of the network of Debating Matters alumni to visit the school and explain what it's like to take part. There is a wealth of information and support on the Debating Matters website.

ACTION POINT: START DEBATING OTHER SCHOOLS

A brilliant way to round off a term of debate would be to organise a one-off debate with another school – this should be planned early on in the term. Tips about the organisation of this can be found in the Advanced Debating Matters Resource Pack, which you can find [here](#). This can take the form of a one-to-one event, where each school provides the speakers for one side of the motion, or an evening/day where you invite several schools to take part. Note that the logistics – chairpeople, judges, room arrangements, refreshments and so on, become progressively more complex as your plans become more ambitious. Even with one other school, there needs to be agreement about the topic, who will take which side, who will (neutrally!) chair the debate, and who the judges will be.

■ TEACHER TIP:

“Allow students to fail – they respond well to it in fact. Don't be afraid to tell pupils it wasn't good enough – if the debate is poor, let it run its natural length, and break it down afterwards.”

CONTACT THE DEBATING MATTERS TEAM

The Debating Matters team can help you in a number of ways. We will endeavour to provide you with details of schools in your area which have participated in the Debating Matters Competition, we can recommend alumni to chair or judge your debates, as well as individuals in your area who have taken part in the competition as judges and who might be willing to judge at your school events.

0207 269 9233 debatingmatters@instituteofideas.com

2. THE DEBATING MATTERS FORMAT

WHY DEBATING MATTERS?

The Debating Matters format is distinct from traditional schools debating in a number of important respects: the competition emphasises substance over style; looks at the real-world issues shaping the contemporary political landscape and subjects students to an important intellectual challenge. Debating Matters demands research skills from the participants, an exploration of topical issues, and a willingness to engage in rational debate with opponents. Judges play a very important role in the competition's structure, asking debaters challenging questions on their arguments, and pushing them to substantiate their case.

In deciding to use the Debating Matters format it is worth considering three key principles of the competition, which could help to inform your activities in school.

- **REAL WORLD DEBATE:** We want students to argue about issues and disagreements that are being fiercely debated in the media, in business and between politicians.
- **CONTENT IS VALUED ABOVE STYLE:** Debating Matters is organised around the central idea that content matters more than style. All students are provided with a substantial Topic Guide, which they are expected to use as a starting point for in-depth research around an issue. Within the format of the competition most of the time is given over to the rigorous cross-examination of students' arguments by the judges, the other team and the audience, rather than to formal speeches.
- **YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY:** Central to the Debating Matters Competition are our judges, who are instructed to take young people seriously by cross-examining their arguments, and pushing them to substantiate their case. While students report that they find this interaction challenging, it is also the aspect of the competition that they find most rewarding. Our judges also state that they relish the opportunity to engage with young people on the issues that really matter in the world.



THE FORMAT – DETAILS

To put together a Debating Matters debate you will need:

A CHAIRPERSON – who takes charge of the debate

THREE JUDGES – to ask debaters questions and provide critical feedback

TWO TEAMS WITH TWO STUDENTS EACH – to put forward their key arguments, having researched their topic in-depth

AN AUDIENCE – to ask students questions and make points of their own

A DEBATING MATTERS DEBATE

■ 0-15 MINS: OPENING PRESENTATIONS

Students make their case in uninterrupted three-minute opening presentations.

■ 15-30 MINS: QUESTIONS FROM THE JUDGES

Moving straight to the judges, the teams are quizzed on the arguments they have made.

■ 30-45 MINS: AUDIENCE QUESTIONS & TEAM EXCHANGES

A range of questions are asked from the audience for both teams, and the speakers are given a chance to respond. After students have responded, teams are asked to cross-examine one another. The audience then have a final round of questions, before debaters are given the chance to offer quick responses.

■ 45-50 MINUTES: FINAL REMARKS

Each speaker is given one minute to give their final responses to questions, and to sum up their case.

■ 50-60 MINUTES: FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS FROM THE JUDGES

Judges are asked to provide feedback on the performances of each team.

■ 60-65 MINUTES: AUDIENCE VOTE AND THE JUDGES' DECISION

Judges leave the room to decide who has won the debate. The judges then return to the room, announcing the verdict and a justification for their decision.

FOR A FULL EXPLANATION OF THE TIMING AND STRUCTURE OF A DEBATING MATTERS DEBATE SEE [HERE](#).

■ JUDGE RALPH LEIGHTON:

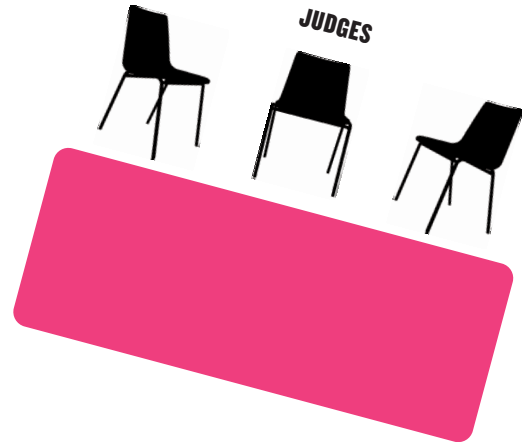


Principal Lecturer in Education, Canterbury Christ Church University

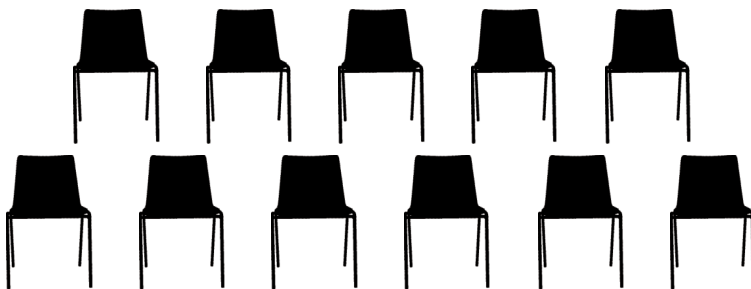
The confidence students obviously gain from engaging in the debates is invaluable. The opportunity for them to challenge and to be challenged, as well as have their ideas taken seriously as adults, will put them in good stead for the future.

DEBATE SET-UP

2ND SPEAKER 1ST SPEAKER CHAIR 1ST SPEAKER 2ND SPEAKER



AUDIENCE



■ TEACHERS TALKING:

Sarah Condren, School Liaison Officer, Burnley College

“The key to successful debating at Burnley College Sixth Form Centre has been identifying enthusiastic students and giving them ownership of the society, with lots of support and help from myself. Technology and social media has played an integral role in not only promoting the society, but also aiding the students to prepare and research for debates. They compete against other college and sixth form societies in competitions and friendlies and have successfully organised competitions for local secondary schools, offered workshops in schools and judged in school competitions as well as battling against our academic staff, university and adult students”.

■ JUSTINE BRIAN, NATIONAL COORDINATOR:



I have really enjoyed hearing about the strides that teachers have made in getting debate off the ground. Through their hard work many schools now have vibrant debate clubs where previously there were none. As National Coordinator of the Debating Matters Competition I am happy to offer any advice you might need in setting something up and using the Debating Matters format. Please contact me on justinebrian@instituteofideas.com or **020 7269 9232**

KEY FACTORS IN DEBATING MATTERS

– WHAT AND WHO YOU NEED

Having got something in motion you should have a go at a formal debate, either within your own school or with another school. Below is a list of things you will need to do:

- **CHOOSE A TOPIC:** Start the process off by choosing a topic and motion.
- **CHOOSE YOUR SPEAKERS:** Choose two speakers FOR the motion and two speakers AGAINST the motion.
- **CHOOSE YOUR JUDGES FOR AN IN-SCHOOL DEBATE:** Approach three teachers, governors or members of the senior management team to judge the debate, or other adults working within the school e.g. librarians, or older students. Make sure that you have a diverse group.
- **OR CHOOSE YOUR JUDGES FOR AN INTER-SCHOOL DEBATE:** because the panel must be impartial, you should consider inviting external judges to participate. Our advice would be to draw on existing contacts as much as possible; if you have an opinionated friend then invite them along! Also draw on the recommendations of friends and colleagues, even better if they can broker introductions. Otherwise Debating Matters can recommend contacts, or good organisations to contact.
- **CHOOSE A CHAIRPERSON:** For whom, see overleaf. For good advice on chairing see [here](#)

PREPARATION

As with decorating a house, the quality of the final product is largely dependent on the quality of the preparation. This is particularly true of the Debating Matters format. Students need to be committed to the task. They need to be given a topic and sufficient time to research it properly. It will almost certainly be necessary, especially early on, for you to provide resources that they can use. This is why Debating Matters produces its Topic Guides, to give students the depth of material that they will need.

Having done the research, speakers need to prepare opening speeches. These should then be road-tested with their teammates, with other students and the teacher asking them questions, making suggestions about improvements, etc. The first taste of formal debating is always nerve-racking, so you will need to be positive and supportive! But it is also important to be critical and to identify weaknesses in students' arguments, so that they can improve and respond to challenges on their feet. It is through this process that speakers gradually gain confidence.

JUDGE ELISABETH TRIBE:



Managing Director, Hodder Education Schools Division

I come back to judge every year because I'm impressed by the dedication and preparation, but also by the rigour and liveliness of the event. It's all enormously stimulating. Students prepare incredibly well for the debates and really care about them. When I ask them questions, I'm impressed by how well they think on their feet, and are so focused and engaged.

DEBATING MATTERS TOPIC GUIDES

Debating Matters now has a library of over 50 topic guides to draw on. These debates relate to big questions in science and experimentation, liberty and the law, arts and culture, health and medicine, politics, the media and more. Debaters use these resources when preparing for the competition, but schools are also encouraged to use the guides for more informal debates, whether with other schools or at the school debate club. All topic guides can be downloaded free of charge from [here](#).

DEBATING MATTERS SAMPLE TOPIC GUIDES

ASSISTED DYING "Physician Assisted Suicide should remain illegal"

NUCLEAR "After Fukushima, we should abandon nuclear power"

EU REFERENDUM "The UK should have a referendum on membership of the European Union"

SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE "We should maintain the union"

DRUGS IN SPORT "Allowing the use of enhancement drugs will not undermine the spirit of sport"

BURQA BANS "European countries should take a lead from France and ban the burqa"

IVF "It is irresponsible to provide IVF to women in their fifties"

ORGAN DONATION "We should introduce a system of presumed consent in organ donation"

MEDIA "The British Press requires tougher regulation"

DEBATING MATTERS ALUMNI

The Debating Matters Competition now has an expanding alumni network made up of former participants who work with the competition in hosting, chairing and judging local rounds.

A core group are keen to work with schools which are new to debate and interested in trying out the format. If you would like to invite one of the alumni team to chair debates, or speak to students about the competition, get in contact with the Debating Matters team at

debatingmatters@instituteofideas.com

THE QUALITIES OF...

... A GOOD CHAIRMAN

The chair plays an important role in the Debating Matters format, acting as ringmaster of proceedings and putting everyone at ease. For good advice on chairing see the notes linked to [here](#). To begin, you may want to chair debates yourself, but build up a core of trusted and effective chairpeople, particularly other staff. Students can make good chairpeople, but need experience before handling formal debates.

... A GOOD JUDGE

The judges are central to the success of the Debating Matters format, whether they are teachers or adults within a school, or the leading scientists and public figures who volunteer to judge in the regional and national finals of the main competition. Their task is to take young people seriously by cross-examining their arguments, and pushing them to substantiate their case. Concentrating on one team at a time, each judge asks a question in turn and then follows up, seeking to make the speakers move the argument forward. The judges have fifteen minutes with the teams, approximately seven minutes with either side. The judges also need to keep notes about the performance of each team, because at the end of the debate they are asked to provide constructive feedback about what each team, and individuals within the team, have done well, and what could be improved. Finally, the judges are responsible for deciding which team has won the debate. For advice for judges see [here](#).

As you develop the use of the Debating Matters format, you will want to build up a reliable team of judges who understand the principles and can question speakers appropriately. Colleagues should be approached first; senior management and headteachers can add a sense of occasion. Once debating is firmly established, it is worth seeking external judges who can bring expertise from a range of backgrounds. School governors and parents, local businesses, doctors, solicitors, journalists are all worth approaching.

... A GOOD DEBATER

In the eyes of Debating Matters, good debaters are made and not born! While some might have a propensity for debate, being thoughtful, intelligent, passionate about ideas and a strong team player, more often than not such qualities are developed through research, argument, encouragement, criticism and experience. However, one important trait to emphasise and develop for the Debating Matters format is intellectual bravery. It is always easier for speakers to take the middle ground, and offend no one. However, in our experience, a winning argument is one where students take up and defend an important principle, taking it to its logical conclusion where possible.

... A GOOD AUDIENCE

The audience play an important role in Debating Matters debates, with ‘audience questions’ taking up a significant part of the discussion. Alongside the judges, audience members contribute to the discussion by asking speakers challenging questions and making points of their own. The atmosphere that we aspire to is one of a lively public meeting, not a question and answer session. Debaters are under no obligation to answer all questions put to them, rather this section of the debate is given over to the audience, with some comment from the panel.

In the early days the audience is likely to consist of members of your debating group. As you organise more formal and public debates, you can invite other students and staff, perhaps parents and the local community, and encourage them to get involved – audiences rarely lack the willingness to put forward their own views! In the formal competition, Debating Matters award individual prizes which are open to all students present on the day and who contribute to the discussion, whether on a panel or from the audience. This not only recognizes outstanding individual contributions to the debates, but also helps to get the audience going!

■ TEACHERS TALKING:

John Read, Section Leader for Psychology/Sociology, Luton Sixth Form College

“When I first started debating at the college, I began the process by getting students to do some basic speaking on familiar topics, just to make them feel comfortable in those early days of standing up and speaking out. Approaching the competition has its challenges, but once involved the students are immersed and always eager for more. I have been fortunate in having worked with some excellent debaters and many of these have taken debating further once they have entered Higher Education”.



ALL PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY

Publicising your activities will motivate your debaters, and also spread the word and encourage others to become involved. Advertise events around school: recruit students to make and put up posters around the school, place notes in registers and make announcements in assemblies. Get students to write reviews and reports on your debates, take photographs, or make films. These can be posted on school intranet and internet websites. Teachers have also stressed the importance of social media, such as Twitter, in organising debate activity and promote the society; virtual learning environments such as Moodle to post information and useful research links, and internet-based blog boards such as stixy.com so students can share information and ideas from home when preparing for debates.

LOGISTICS

A USEFUL LIST OF WHAT IS NEEDED FOR A FORMAL DEBATE CAN BE FOUND HERE.

AFTERWARDS...

■ **GET IN TOUCH WITH DEBATING MATTERS:** Debating Matters is very keen to hear from teachers about their experiences and experiments with debate. Not only does it give us a better insight in to advising teachers who want to try something similar, it also allows us to profile your achievements and experiences and to celebrate vibrant, thoughtful and challenging debate for young people who are interested in ideas and the issues that are shaping society. Please do get in touch to let us know how you get on by emailing debatingmatters@instituteofideas.com or by phone – **020 7 269 9233**.

FOR MORE IDEAS ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN BE DOING WITH THE DEBATING MATTERS FORMAT IN SCHOOL, SEE THE DEBATING MATTERS RESOURCE PACK HERE.



SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

1. Debating Matters format explained:

This is the standard format of a Debating Matters debate, used throughout the competition year.
<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/debatetimingandstructure/>

2. Topic Guides Library:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/topicguides/>

3. Email invitations and confirmations for schools and judges:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/confirmationemails/>

4. Advice for teachers:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/howtowin/>

5. Advice for students:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/adviceforstudents/>

6. Advice for judges:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/adviceforjudges/>

7. Chairing notes:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/chairingnotes/>

8. Chairing plan – for chairs to use for each debate:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/chairingplan/>

9. Room set-up:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/roomsetup/>

10. Judges record sheet:

<http://www.debatingmatters.com/getinvolved/judgesrecordsheet/>

11. Case studies:

Debating Matters attracts a wide range of schools from across the UK – those with debating experience, and those without. Each school has their own unique way of realising the importance of debate within their institution.

On the Debating Matters website, we offer a selection of stories from Debating Matters schools from across the education sector, each happy to share their unique experiences and success with those interested in encouraging more debate in their own school.

http://www.debatingmatters.com/news/news_article/school_case_studies_-_debate_is_alive_and_kicking_across_the_uk/