Debating

Debate is a two-sided argument that follows strict rules regarding format and conduct or is to discuss a question by considering opposed arguments.

Preparing for the Debate:

- Research your side of the argument (opinion is not enough; you must have strong supporting material).
- Include relevant facts that your opponent(s) may not know.
- Communicate your facts effectively (practice in front of others or a mirror). Confidence is key.
- Prepare for a rebuttal to the argument from your opponent(s). Rebuttal is contradicting the evidence that has been presented by your opponent(s).
- Know the basic argument model: If you make a statement (claim), you must have reasons (proof) to back it up. Proof can be data, statistics, logical explanation or testimony. Always give the source of your information.
  
  Claim=Proof

- Know how to impact arguments: After you make a claim and give proof, explain why it is important to the topic. Don’t merely repeat your claim; give reasons why the claim is important. Relate the claim back to the topic and to your position.
- Structure your debate like a speech: Use the Introduction-Body-Conclusion model for your presentation.
- Learn the specifics of the debate: How many people will speak? How long is each speech? How many times will each person speak? Will questions be allowed?
To Defend or Oppose:

It is important to remember that opposing a topic does not mean that you have to take the opposite perspective. Often times you can oppose the topic by offering an alternative solution, idea or plan.

Know what you are opposing: Are you opposing the topic, the plan or the points brought up by the other speakers?

- If you oppose the topic, what is your exact stance?
- If you oppose the plan, do you have to suggest a new plan?
- If you oppose the other speaker, will you point out flaws in logic or offer other ideas?

Be able to identify what is wrong with the proposition: It is not enough to say something is wrong; clearly identify what the problem or error is.

- Does the proposed idea cause harm not mentioned?
- Does the proposed idea actually fix the problem?
- Does the cost of the idea outweigh the benefits?
- Are there barriers in the system (such as laws) that will prevent the idea from working?
- Is the idea free from fallacious logic?

Be mutually exclusive: If you suggest a different plan or idea, your plan cannot occur in the same manner as the other plan.

Tips For Debating:

- Listen carefully to the opposition and take good notes on the points presented by your opponent(s). Use these notes during subsequent speeches to directly answer any points and refute the ideas presented by the other side.
- Remember to respect the other debater; give them time to speak without interruption.
- Keep your cool! Remember it is the other person's job to attack your ideas. Don't take it personally.