

Competition Events – At A Glance

An Introduction to World Schools Debate (WSD)



Event Description

World Schools Debate features a dynamic format that combines the concepts of “prepared” motions with “impromptu” motions, encouraging debaters to focus on specific issues rather than debate theory or procedural arguments. This highly interactive style of debate allows debaters to engage each other, even during speeches. The challenging format requires good teamwork and in-depth quality argumentation.

Considerations for World Schools Debate

World Schools Debate is a three-on-three format. While a team may consist of five members, only three students from a team participate in a given debate. Resolutions come in two types: prepared motions and impromptu motions. Teams will be assigned one of two sides in each round—either the *proposition* team proposing the motion or the *opposition* team advocating the rejection of the motion. Debaters present their position on a motion, refute their opponents, and respond to questions throughout the course of the debate.


Traits of Successful World Schools Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful World Schools debaters to keep in mind:

- Thinks logically
- Analytical
- Persuasive
- Team-oriented
- Interested in world events
- Culturally competent

Past World Schools Motions

- This House would eliminate all occupational licensing requirements for practicing the law.
- This House supports the creation of LGBT schools.
- This House would establish an international cap and trade system for refugees.
- This House believes that a two party system is preferable to a multi party system.
- This House supports the privatization of all government owned energy companies.
- This House would prevent immediate family members of leaders from working in the government.
- This House regrets the use of technology to correct perceived imperfections (e.g., Photoshop, auto-tuning, etc.).
- This House regrets celebrity political speech.
- This House supports parental leave.
- This House supports national funding of the arts.

Learn More! The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For World Schools Debate, we provide a number of helpful resources—including judge training, sample ballots, motion guides, access to final round videos, and more. Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit www.speechanddebate.org for more information. 

Find Your Voice

World Schools Debate opened my eyes to issues of global importance while sharpening my communication, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. The unique format of Worlds enables a teamwork dynamic that is not found in other formats of debate.”

— Tiana Menon, Association Alum

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Basic Understandings

In World Schools Debate (WSD), two teams of three students debate each other. While a team may consist of five members, only three students from a team participate in a given debate. Resolutions come in two types: prepared motions and impromptu motions. Teams are assigned one of two sides in each round—either the *proposition* team proposing the motion or the *opposition* team advocating the rejection of the motion. Debaters present their position on a motion, refute their opponents, and respond to questions throughout the course of the debate.

Research

After students do an initial brainstorming session on prepared motions, they should conduct research. In World Schools Debate, evidence is viewed differently than people tend to view it in more traditional forms of debate (LD, PF, Policy). Trying to approach evidence like one would in other events is counter-productive to individuals participating in Worlds. Instead, in order to be competitive in this event, one should incorporate contemporary and historical examples, statistics that show data and trends, analogies, and experiential evidence.

For impromptu motions, students cannot conduct outside research. Instead, they must rely upon their own understanding of the motion plus an almanac and a dictionary. As a result, it is important for students to stay up-to-date on current events and understand global issues of significance. Researching not just current events but the history to understand how we've arrived at these current events is important. Additionally, in the Worlds format, there are motions that focus on social, entertainment, and other issues, not just political ones.

Research is useful to understand motions and be able to generate arguments. The emphasis in World Schools is less on individual pieces of evidence and more on developing analysis and showing understanding. Research is acceptable on a prepared motion; however, citing evidence is not the primary means of developing argumentation in World Schools Debate.



Structure

Speech	Time Limit
Proposition Team Speaker 1	8 minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 1	8 minutes
Proposition Team Speaker 2	8 minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 2	8 minutes
Proposition Team Speaker 3	8 minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 3	8 minutes
Opposition Reply	4 minutes
Proposition Reply	4 minutes

Organization

Casing

Both prepared and impromptu motions are offered at every Worlds competition. Prepared motions are released prior to a tournament, so you have nearly an unlimited amount of time to think through writing your cases. However, for impromptu motions, you only have a limited amount of time (one hour!) to divide your time between case-writing and practicing.

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Below is a case outline that can be used for both prepared and impromptu motions, along with explanations of what each portion of the outline means. Many arguments for prepared motions will be guided by your prior research in addition to thinking about a topic, whereas arguments for an impromptu motion will be guided purely by thinking about a topic and what material you already know going into the round.



The following example outlines the introduction and arguments for a first proposition speech. Similarly, the first opposition speech may use the same outline for the framing and arguments for their side. The second proposition and second opposition speakers also can use the argument outline for creating the third argument presented in their respective speeches.

Intro Outline:

Hook: A few sentences aimed at grabbing the attention of the audience.

Team Line: A short sentence that is rhetorically pleasing aimed at explaining the core of your side on a given topic.

State the Motion/Side

Framing: This section has necessary definitions for vague terms or terms of art in the motion, a model/criteria/definition of the value term for policy/fact/value motions respectively, and explanation of the burden of each side of the debate.

Roadmap: An explanation of what you are going to do in your speech. (e.g., “I will give our first two arguments, and my teammate <Name> will give our third argument.”)

Argument Outline:

Tagline: Begins with “Our first/second/third argument is...” followed by five to seven words explaining the claim to your argument.

Thesis: Two or three sentences giving a summary of your argument. Think of it like the thesis to an English essay.

Steps: Steps are the warrant to your argument. Use evidence to explain why your argument is true. Use different forms of “steps” to back up the validity of your claim. For example, “steps” could reference different stakeholders who are affected by the argument; “steps” could be subpoints with different examples; or “steps” could be chronological or causal.

Impact: A few sentences explaining why your argument matters. Who does it affect? How does it affect them?

Weighing: A few sentences explaining why your argument should matter more than the other team’s arguments. (Generally this comes after the first proposition speech, since there isn’t anything to compare your impacts to yet!)

Refutation Strategies

Debaters should use a combination of both offense and defense when responding to their opponent’s arguments. Stick to one to three arguments at most against every constructive argument that your opponent makes, because you should prioritize more efficient and better explained arguments rather than blippy, short arguments. Offense tends to be better than defense because it forces the opposing team to defend their arguments or risk losing to your offensive response.



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The Two Types of Refutation

There are two main types of refutation: *offense* and *defense*. Your responses to your opponent's arguments can utilize both or simply one of the two.

“Offense” refers to points of refutation that make your opponent's argument a reason for why they should *lose* the debate or for why you should *win* the debate. For example, on the topic, “Cats are better than dogs,” one side might argue that cats are better because they tend to keep to themselves and are low-maintenance. The other side might make an offensive argument saying that is actually why cats are *not* better than dogs. Because people purchase pets for a primary reason—to have a companion—if cats keep to themselves and are low-maintenance, then they are in fact *not* a good pet, whereas dogs love their owners and make great companions.



“Defense” refers to points of refutation that indicate an argument is not true, doesn't matter, or does matter *but* is outweighed by another argument in the debate. For example, with the same topic, “Cats are better than dogs,” a defensive response might say that cats are in fact not low-maintenance because they require more frequent grooming.

Flowing

“Flowing” as it is commonly known in debate refers to how you take notes in your respective version of debate. Each



style tends to have their own form of flowing. If you are learning WSD, you have likely learned a way to flow that you prefer from another style of debate. Students can use any form of flowing that they find easiest for them to follow the structure and arguments of the debate round. However, it is important to know how many WSD judges will flow your speeches and how that might impact the way you should speak.

Judges who flow in a more “conventional” WSD format will likely fold up their paper into six equal proportions horizontally rather vertically. Each sixth of the paper, which forms a column, will represent one of the constructive speeches from the first proposition speech to the third opposition speech. Then, they will flow the reply speeches side by side on another sheet of paper. Other judges will fold up their paper into eight equally proportioned columns and flow every speech including the reply speeches. Regardless of how they proportion their flows, they will flow each speech from the top down as you speak then draw arrows connecting arguments and their respective points of refutation.

Additionally, some judges might take note of who offers POIs (Points of Information) and what side they are on. At the end of the debate, if a team member has offered no POIs, their speaker points might be docked a speaker point. If an entire team has no POIs, the entire team will be docked speaker points. This is not true of all judges, but many keep some form of tally as debates occur. Since WSD ought to be decided by the team that has the most speaker points at the end of the debate, this is crucial to note.

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Standing it Up/Practicing

Practicing and speaking is one of the most important things to do while preparing for any speech or tournament. Each speech needs to be fluid and seemingly off-the-cuff (even if that means you have practiced it nearly a dozen times). WSD has a huge focus on persuasion/public speaking, which must be earned. Persuasion comes from standing up and practicing your speeches to get your tone, emphasis, and rate of speech for your arguments right. A nearly perfect case means nothing in a world where you have not practiced delivering the speech.

As such, you should devote a huge portion of your time preparing for a tournament to practicing delivering your respective arguments as well as engaging in full practice debates. Practice how you play so that you can be one of the most prepared teams at a tournament. A good rule of




thumb is that you should never go into a debate round having a) not practiced your assigned speech and b) not having had a practice debate on that topic.

Performance Tips

When at your first tournament, it is important to keep in mind that it gets easier with more practice. The goal is not about where you begin, but where you end. Improving from round to round, and tournament to tournament, is the true mark of success. Focus not only on what you could enhance, but also on what you did well. Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If they provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the wins and losses—it won't lead to greater success!

Resources

The Association offers great resources to our members. These include webinars, motion guides, judging materials, and more. Once you join the Association and register on our website, you can access these and other materials at www.speechanddebate.org/resources. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to World Schools Debate. 

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