



BOSTON DEBATE LEAGUE

Transforming School Culture Through Debate

Debate Terms

- **Opening Statements**
One speaker from the team prepares arguments that clearly state the team's position (or answer to the debate question) AND give strong evidence from the text. This happens first in the debate. You can give each speech a time limit (1–3 minutes) or ask them to make a certain number of arguments.
- **Cross-Examination (optional)**
One speaker from another team has the opportunity question the person making the opening statements after they speak. These cross-examinations can last 1 minute. This follows the opening statements. If you have more students in each group than roles, you can designate a person to be the cross-examinee and respond to the questions instead of the student who gave the opening statement.
- **Attack**
One speaker from your team is assigned to attack another team's arguments. They must answer each argument made in the opening statement. S/he should attack the team's position AND their evidence. This follows opening statements (and cross-examinations).
- **Defense**
One speaker from your team will speak for 1–3 minutes to defend your team from the attacks made. This follows the attack round.
- **Closing Statements**
One speaker from the team prepares comments to close the debate. They should explain why their group/side should win as well as attacking the arguments made by the other groups. This is your final chance to win the debate. Closing Statements conclude the debate.
- **Resolution**
The proposal or question being debated.
- **Opposition**
Arguing against something.
- **Opponent**
Someone you are arguing against.
- **Colleague**
Someone on your team.



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Debate Roles

- **Making Opening Statements**

Make your best case. This is the only time you have to speak with a clean slate, before the attacks. Make an impression on the judges by making strong, clear arguments. You should make multiple arguments to support your position. Be prepared with strong evidence from the text. Imagine you are a lawyer building a strong case, and argue that your position is the ONLY right one.

- **Cross-Examining Another Group (optional)**

This technique is for more experienced debaters to challenge what is said in the opening statements. The speaker for the group being cross-examined remains standing, and another group asks questions about the group's evidence and claims. This is a time to help clarify things you don't understand, to begin to put the other team in the hot seat, and build your own case at the same time.

- **Attacking**

Review your notes and RESTATE what the other team said in their opening statement (or cross-examination). Then FIRE BACK by challenging that point. Use phrases like: "My opponent said: _____. I completely disagree because: _____" when on the attack. Use evidence from the text to back up your points.

You can also try some of these other techniques: come up with new evidence to prove your opponent's view wrong, question the other team's knowledge, interpret your opponent's words in ways that help your case, be critical, listen to all your opponent's points, know as much as possible so you look like the expert.

- **Defending**

You need to take great notes during the debate to do this part well, and you need to be able to think on your feet. It's up to you to rebuild your arguments after others have worked hard to tear them down. Restate your own points. Restate your opponent's points and fire back. You need to make sure that you provide the evidence and the arguments to put down all the attacks from your opponent. Make sure you answer every argument made by your opponents.

- **Making Closing Statements**

This is your group's last chance to win this case. Give us your best argument(s). Tell us why the other group has failed to prove their points. Try to tell us the story of this debate through your eyes, and convince us that your group masterfully controlled the debate with strong evidence and logic. Say things like: "This is why we win the round" and "The other teams have not successfully argued the case."