

**1. Prepared Debates.** When you attend some tournaments, you will often begin with two Prepared rounds, which means that you received the resolution at least two weeks in advance, so your arguments should be well prepared. To prepare for a debate well, you should ensure that the Claims for both speakers are uniquely different from each other, and your Evidence that supports each Claim, which should be quoted, comes from credible sources. Finally, you should practice your speech at home, so you can deliver your speech by glancing at your notes very little. You should not read your speech.

**2. Impromptu Debates.** Most of the rounds at a Debate tournament are Impromptu, which means that you receive about 15-20 minutes only to prepare your speeches. During this time, you need to first think about the fundamental dichotomy in the speech, and then you and your partner should imagine quickly various claims, which are distinctly different from each other. Then for each claim you should think of anecdotal evidence, which means that you paraphrase information that you remember from a book, article, podcast or video. (For more details, see the post called [The Structure of Arguments and Types of Evidence](#))

**3. Protected Times.** During a 6-minute speech, the first and last 30 seconds are protected times, and during a 8-minute speech, the first and last minute are protected times, which means that an opposing debater cannot ask a POI during this time because the time is necessary for the speaker to focus on opening the speech and closing the speech.

**4. Road Mapping and Signposting.** The ability to listen well is very difficult, so you need to assist the listener by Road Mapping, which means that you describe the structure of your speech before you deliver your speech. For example, if you are the second opposition speaker, you might say, "I will first refute their arguments, restate my partners arguments and then introduce two new arguments." You can also assist the listener to understand your speech by using Signposting, which means that you use transitional language during your speech. For example, you may say, "That completes my first

argument, so I will now move on to my second argument.” Using Signposting in your speech is very important!

**5. Case Construction.** A case is the structure of your speech, which consists of a resolution and at least three arguments. In constructing a case, you should begin by reflecting seriously on the fundamental dichotomy in the resolution. For example, consider the following resolution: “A terminally ill patient has the right to die.” In this resolution, the dichotomy is Personal Freedom vs State Freedom to impose restrictions on you. Because side Proposition agrees with the Resolution, the speakers have the Burden of Proof, which are arguments that support the Resolution. In response, side Opposition has the Burden of Rejoinder, which are Refutations that show how the arguments of side Proposition do not convincingly support the Resolution. Side Opposition is also expected to offer new arguments that offer reasons why the Resolution should not be accepted. (For more details, see the post called The Structure of Arguments)

**6. Resolution.** The resolution, which is frequently called the Motion, is the thesis statement that is debated for the round. To create a resolution, the writer needs to ensure that both sides of the resolution have an equal number of arguments for the proposition and opposition sides. Frequently, the resolution begins with the acronym THBT (i.e. This house believes that ...) or THW (i.e. This house would ...). Also, sometimes, an **Information Slide** precedes the resolution because the resolution itself lacks sufficient context to understand the intention of the resolution.

**7. Salutation.** The Salutation, which is required of all the debaters, is an acknowledgement of others in the debate, who are typically the Speaker, or judge of the debate, and the other debaters. However, prior to the Salutation, it is best practice to begin your speech with an **Anecdote**. For example, consider the following Resolution: Palestine has the right to a sovereign country. Before stating the salutation, the PM might consider the following anecdotal opening:

“While Abraham Lincoln struggled to uphold his vision for the freedom of the new colonies, he famously said, “Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves.” Mr. Speaker, fellow debaters, I submit to you that Abraham Lincoln was inspired by these words because they reflect a fundamental aspect of human nature, which is that a people cannot be content unless they have the freedom to govern

themselves. In the context of this resolution, the Palestinians, like the Israelis, are unique peoples, both of whom have the right to govern themselves. I will support the resolution by offering the following three arguments: ... “

**8. Modelling.** The concept of Modelling applies only to the Prime Minister (PM), who introduces the Resolution to the other debaters. Because the PM is bringing forward the Resolution, and because a Resolution can sometimes be ambiguous, it is incumbent on the PM to define specifically his (her) interpretation of the Resolution. Once the modelling is complete, the others must accept the PM’s interpretation of the Resolution even though they may disagree with the interpretation. When Modelling the Resolution, the PM should consider the following three ideas: Ambiguous Words, Jurisdiction, Demographic.

**a) Ambiguous Words.** The PM needs to define key concepts in the Resolution that may be ambiguous. For example, consider the following Resolution, “Offshore manufacturing should be banned.” Because the phrase “offshore manufacturing” is ambiguous, the PM needs to clearly state that it refers to a local company choosing to manufacture products in another country.

**b) Jurisdiction.** When Modelling, the PM needs to define where the Resolution applies. Does it apply to a nation only, developed countries only or does it apply to the entire world? To a significant degree, the Resolution will dictate the jurisdiction, but sometimes it does not. For example, consider the Resolution, “Investing in Tax Havens should be banned.” Does this refer to Canadians only using Tax Havens, or does it refer to people in all countries? The PM needs to make this clear.

**c) Demographic.** Sometimes the Resolution focuses on the treatment of a group of people in society, but it does not state specifically that group of people. For example, consider the following resolution: “Affirmative action is necessary for fair college and university admissions.” In this context, the phrase ‘affirmative action’ could refer to all people or to only those who have been historically disadvantaged.

**9. Points of Information (POIs).** During a speech, except for the Cross Examination format, each member of the opposing side is expected to ask at least one question. Each question should be brief (1-2 sentences long only),

and it should focus on a flaw in the argument or refutation of the speaker. To ask the question, you stand up and gesture with the forearm forward to indicate your intention to ask a question. If you are the speaker, a) You can reject the POI completely by saying “no thank you;” b) you can delay the POI by saying, “I’ll take your question in a moment,” or c) you can accept the POI, but you should not do so until you are finished your sentence or thought. (For more details, see the post on POIs and Refutations)

**10. Refutation and Rebuttals.** These two words, like POIs, refer to a moment of Clash, which is when a speaker on the opposing side asks a question or makes a statement that disagrees with an idea presented by the other side. Technically speaking, the word Refutation refers to a statement of disagreement that comes usually at the beginning of each constructive speech. The word Rebuttal refers to the closing speech in the Canadian Parliament and the Cross Examination formats, and the Whip speech in the British Parliament format.

**11. Squirrelling** means the PM offers an unreasonable Modelling of a Resolution. When this happens, the leader of the Opposition does not need to accept the Modelling by the PM. For example, consider the following Resolution, which has an information slide: Equality is giving everyone a pair of shoes, and equity is giving everyone shoes that fit. “THBT equity is necessary for societies to prosper.” In view of the information slide, it would be wrong for the PM to model the Resolution by interpreting the word ‘equity’ to refer to money only. Rather, the intention of the resolution clearly refers to customizing public policies.

**12. Knifing.** This concept refers to when a speaker criticizes a member on the same side! This very rarely happens in the CP or CX formats of debating, but it sometimes occurs in the BP format because the Closing team speakers are in fact in competition with the Opening teams speakers on the same side. That is, the evaluation of the BP debate requires that a judge rank the Opening teams and Closing teams separately, so if a Closing team disagrees with the content of the Opening team on the same side, it is very tempting to express that disagreement. Instead, although the Closing team could disagree with some content of the Opening team on the same side, the Closing team must not express that disagreement. Rather, it should use what is agreeable from the Opening content and ignore the rest.

