

# Educate Together National Debating Competition 2024-25

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## SECTION A (OVERVIEW):

### FORMAT

* Each school can register a panel of between four and eight debaters for a team on the official ***Registration Form*** – maximum of two teams per school allowed – this form must be submitted to the group coordinator before the competition begins – it is possible to submit an amended form if a number of debaters have left the team, but this must be submitted before the next debate, not after it.
* First and second year students may take part in the competition.
* Fee per team is €40 payable to Clogher Rd
* Any combination of the panel members can be selected as the four debaters for any given event
* The first stage of the competition is a league of four groups with two teams qualifying from each group for quarter-finals
* The competition is knock-out from this stage forward
* The first round of the knock-out stages is decided by lot
* Semi-Finals will be (a) Winner of Quarter-Final A v Winner of Quarter-Final C; (b) Winner of Quarter-Final B v Winner of Quarter-Final D;
* The groups, motions and sides for each group fixture will be provided to all coaches in advance of the starting date of the competition
* Deadline dates for each round will be listed in the schedule of debates
* Results must be forwarded by the winning team to the group coordinator as soon as possible after the debate takes place

### PRE-COMPETITION:

* Training to be organised: (a) for all debaters; (b) chairs and timekeepers; (c) judges.
* Educational workshops will be organised periodically during the competition to add educational value – teachers will be invited to present these on their topics of expertise.

### HOME TEAM - Pre-Debate Checklist:

1. Home team contacts away team and sets a date for the debate in consultation with the judging school
   1. [Link to Contact details and fixtures](https://galwayetss-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/gcampion_galwayetss_ie/EdhETHS9rG5GrGBw0Rah4gIBeVQ8dkT_hs4rzJj9yqN7nw?e=8qvpQt) - Please let the committee know if there are any inaccuracies in this document
2. Home team creates and distributes zoom link (with waiting room) for the debate

### DEBATE CHECKLIST

1. Each school can use **one device only** for speakers of the debate to avoid technical difficulties
2. Student speakers may use their own devices for questions
3. All attendees must be muted when not speaking
4. One teacher from each school should be a co-host in order to admit their own students
5. All attendees must have cameras turned on
6. Chairperson explains the rules and introduces the teams
7. Timekeeper explains time rules;
8. Chair starts debate and invites first speaker of the proposition.

### CHAIRPERSON:

* The chairperson introduces the debate motion and the teams and ensures that the rules of the debate are followed;
* The chairperson is responsible for keeping the debate running smoothly – being really alert throughout the debate to when speakers are finishing up and focusing on smooth transitions from one speaker to the next without long silences in between (reminding speakers to unmute if necessary) – important transitions are after speeches finish and after the third question has been answered by each speaker - the chairperson needs to maintain awareness about these moments because it's time to introduce the next part of the debate.
* The chair must ensure that questions are short (not mini-speeches) and that they are phrased as questions
* If a speaker wants to ask a second question, the speaker must request that to the chair ***‘Permission to follow-up please’*** – the chair will decide whether to accept or deny this request
* In the planning, a person should be on standby to take over as chair temporarily to keep the debate flowing if the chairperson has internet connection problems. The chairperson should know that if they lose connection, they have to return as quickly as possible and this person will hand the debate back to them at the next appropriate moment.
* If a speaker has technical problems, the chairperson must reshuffle the speaking order to give them time to sort it out – if the connection is lost completely, one of the other speakers can be nominated to speak again - making the missing speaker’s speech instead.
* If two speakers from the same team lose connection, the chair can ask the teachers to decide whether the debate should be stopped and rescheduled or whether they have substitutes to stand in for those speakers
* If a speaker goes over the four minutes, the chairperson will say ***‘closing comments please’*** (calmly insisting voice that encourages the speaker to finish after the next sentence) – those who continue speaking after this warning will lose marks with judges according to each judge’s discretion

### TIMEKEEPER

* Timekeeper should introduce the rules about time at the start of each debate
* The timekeeper starts the clock with the speaker’s first word
* Time signalling – agreed to ring a bell or have a similar sound at 2.30 (indicate minimum time has been reached) and 3.30 (indicate 30 seconds are left)
* The timekeeper records the times and submits them to the judges when they go to the breakaway room
* The timekeeper indicates to the chairperson when the speaker goes over the four minutes

### SPEAKERS

* Each speaker has a maximum of four minutes.
* Each speaker’s role is as outlined below:

1. **Proposition Speaker One:** Introduce the team, the main arguments and speak about one area (no rebuttal expected)
2. **Opposition Speaker One:** Introduce the team, the main arguments and speak about one area (rebut first speaker’s main points on the area addressed)
3. **Proposition Speaker Two:** Introduce the arguments to be spoken about & points from previous speaker that will be rebutted, go through main issue(s) for the speech and rebut previous speaker – important to conclude the speech properly
4. **Opposition Speaker Two:** Introduce the arguments to be spoken about & points from previous speaker that will be rebutted, go through main issue(s) for the speech and rebut previous speaker – important to conclude the speech properly
5. **Proposition Speaker Three:** Introduce the arguments to be spoken about & points from previous speaker that will be rebutted, go through main issue(s) for the speech and rebut previous speaker – important to conclude the speech properly
6. **Opposition Speaker Three:** Introduce the arguments to be spoken about & points from previous speaker that will be rebutted, go through main issue(s) for the speech and rebut previous speaker – important to conclude the speech properly
7. **Proposition Speaker Four:** This final speech does not introduce new arguments – it revises all the main arguments from both sides and explains why the proposition side is right and why they should win the debate;
8. **Opposition Speaker Four:** This final speech does not introduce new arguments – it revises all the main arguments from both sides and explains why the opposition side is right and why they should win the debate;

* Speakers will speak for between **two and a half minutes** and **four-minutes** per person – short speeches are usually less impressive in terms of content than longer speeches – the best debaters would be expected to make four-minute speeches
* Speakers are expected to use short notes only – reading speeches is not the goal of this debating competition – two good training points for speaking without notes are: (1) use stories because they are easy to remember and the audience find them interesting (win-win approach); (2) create hypotheticals to test arguments and support points.
* The speakers will be alerted by the timekeeper when the time reaches **three and a half minutes** – the timekeeper will let the speaker know they have 30 seconds left
* The first speaker for the proposition starts the debate and then the speakers alternate between teams until the final opposition speaker speaks
* Once the judges start their work, both coaches will give feedback to both teams before the impromptu challenge starts

### QUESTIONS

* After each speech, the speaker will be asked **three follow up questions** – these questions can be by**students of the opposing side or teachers if necessary to get to the three questions (the chairperson will choose who asks the questions).** Questions must be about the content of the speeches and should be short and designed to explore statements or arguments further.
* The chair should take questions from the other team first of all – the opposing team should ask all three questions – only if required will the chair accept questions from teachers – this is only if judges need to support the questioning if not enough questions are being asked by the opposing team so that the speaker gets the opportunity to answer three questions.
* If people try to follow up a question with a second question - the chair should remind the questioner to ask ‘***permission to follow up’*** - the chair can decide whether to allow a second question to the same person or move to another person. The general rule for this will be to move on and give another person a chance to ask their question if this option is available, but if no such questions are forthcoming, then a second question from the same person can be approved;

### MOTIONS

* Interruptions to the sequence of the debate on procedural matters can only be introduced as ‘Points of Order’ – the chair will entertain them at the right time.

### JUDGING

* **Each school is asked to provide one team of judges** (two students – at least one student must be fifth or sixth year) – the goal is to have neutral judging throughout the competition
* In the league rounds, for practical purposes if absolutely necessary, teams may agree to go with the ***equal bias formula*** of two judges per competing school (one senior cycle student and one junior cycle student) with all judges committing to impartiality and maintaining no discussions with either side before, during or after the debate. There must always be one teacher in each judging team.
* A neutral judging panel will be provided from the quarter-finals forward
* Students must be involved in the judging of every debate throughout the competition
* All debates will be held by zoom during school time at a time agreed by the teams (target time for each event is 75 minutes)
* A technical check will be carried out 15 minutes before the starting time for the debate
* A chairperson and a timekeeper need to be appointed for each debate – these roles can go to students of the home team.
* All judges must receive training before the competition starts – this training will focus on understanding the rubric for judging

### MARKING

* The has four sections:

**(a) Structure & Content 30% (unity of the speech and the quality of thought in arguments and rebuttals – going under or over the time limits will be a factor when looking at content);**

**(b) Delivery 30% (reading speeches will be punished severely here Þ marked out of 20% instead of 30%);**

**(c) Answering Questions 30% (content of answers and composure in dealing with questions);**

**(d) Overall performance 10% (bigger picture view – overall impression of the speech and the questions answered in terms of its contribution to the debate)**

* Once the four speakers have been graded, there is an **additional 50-mark grade** for the team’s overall skill in asking question to the opposing four speakers during the debate
* The judging team should appoint a head judge to collect the results at the end and determine the winning team
* Judges will receive the times for each speaker after the last speaker finishes answering questions and will take this information into account when marking each speaker
* There is no collaboration between judges and no discussion of individual scores
* After the final speaker answers the questions, the judges will take 5 minutes in a separate room to work out the scores and then return with the results
* The four scores for each team will be counted up by each judge for team totals - **individual scores will not be published**.  Then each judge’s team totals will be added up to decide the overall winner of the debate
* Once the winning team is determined, the judges can then consult to choose the best speaker in the debate
* In the event of a dispute about the result, the two teams can agree a repeat of the debate with a new motion decided by the group coordinator – if one side wants the result to stand, the other can appeal to the group coordinator who will ask for a report from both teams and make a decision about whether to call for a repeat of the debate with a new motion or award the points according to the original result. This decision will be final.

### IMPROMPTU SPEAKING CHALLENGE FOR THE AUDIENCE

* There is an opportunity for some speaking games while the judging is taking place e.g. further discussion of the debating topic open to the audience or for fun, practice one minute impromptu speeches on random topics (resource provided below, but an internet search will provide many further resources):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Birthdays  2. The Year 2030  3. Space Travel  4. Nothing is Impossible  5. Dogs  6. Cats  7. Exams  8. If I were a Dictator  9. Mobile Phones  10. Football  11. The Environment  12. Politicians  13.  Cloning  14.  Is tourism a good or a bad thing?  15.  The Importance of Sport  16.  TV does more harm than good  17.    The United Nations no longer lives up to its ideals  18.    Do prisons serve a useful purpose in our society?  19.    Which country has the best way of life?  20.    Should all nuclear weapons be abolished?  21.   Is fashion important?  22.   Is the death penalty justifiable?  23.   Zoos - Good or bad?  24.   Is our time on earth coming to a close?  25.   Should we tax the rich more than the poor? | 26.   Should we be forced to do voluntary work?  27.   Do footballers get paid too much?  28.   Beauty or knowledge, which one would you choose?  29.   Should Animals Be Used for Scientific Experimentation?  30.   Coffee or tea?  31.   Dogs or cats?  32.   What makes a good person?  33.   Homework  34.   The Ozone Layer  35.   Electro Magnetic Fields  36.   Covid-19  37.   What is the best birthday celebration you have ever had?  38.   The best movie you ever saw  39.   What was something that made you laugh until you cried?  40.   If you could have one superhuman ability, what would it be and why?  41.   What will the world be like in a hundred years’ time?  42.   What are the best foods you’ve ever eaten?  43.   Why I **would/would not** travel to Mars  44.   Who were the best leaders the world has ever known?  45.   Is honesty the best policy?  46.   If you had to move to another county, where would you go and why?  47.   Fruit  48.   Money  49.   Travel  50.   Success |

### GROUP RESULTS

* A winning team receives 3 points – draws are 2 points for each team – a losing team receives 1 point – walkovers are awarded when a team is impossible to contact before the deadline elapses: in this case, the winning team gets 3 points and the losing team 0 points – if an extension is needed for any reason to the deadline for a round, this must be organised with the competition organiser with the agreement of the opposing team. If both teams cancel a debate, both receive 0 points.
* If a school withdraws from the competition, walkovers will be awarded to all other teams in the group (3 points)
* If a debate does not take place, the school that cancelled it concedes a walkover to the other school
* All results to be forwarded to the group coordinator at the earliest opportunity after the debate events take place – once the league rounds are completed, the results go to the competition coordinator
* **2** teams from each group will go through to the quarter finals.

### PHOTOGRAPHY & RECORDING

* Schools may organise consent with parents & students for photographs (screenshots) to be taken by a designated staff member for publicity purposes according to their own school policies – but no photography should take place without the express consent of the parents/guardians of any students involved in an event who are in the photographs
* Recording debates is not allowed – for the final, consent will be requested to record this for training for the future and a souvenir for the participants.

### ALL-IRELAND FINAL & PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR

* All teams will be invited to watch the final – the winners will be the ***‘Educate Together Secondary School National Debating Champions’*** – time for a big celebration in your school
* At the start of the new competition for the following year, a coordinators meeting will take place to review and improve the competition for next year.

## SECTION B (LOGISTICS AND ONLINE SAFETY):

* The school listed as the home team for a fixture (first team) will make contact with the other school **at least one week prior** to the debate and organise a suitable time for the event – a judging team from another school will be appointed for a fixture and they must be consulted also.
* Once the debate is organised, the home team will send out a meeting link to the coach of the opposing team and the judging team and set up the event
* Platform to be used is zoom
* Cameras must be on during the debate – this is a simulation of a real debate where people interact
* One device only can be used for speakers, however students will use their own devices to connect to the event, name themselves and their school. They may use their own device to ask questions.
* The coach of the home team should share the link only with those participating in the event
* If using multiple devices from one room at school, it is important to mute all but one device at any given time to avoid a huge echo
* For all events, a waiting room must be set up so that the coaches can carefully check who is arriving before admitting them to the event – all teachers will be made co-hosts and should admit people from their own schools only
* Any members of the panel in attendance who do not have speaking roles should be muted throughout the event
* If there is any doubt whatsoever about the identity of someone looking to join a meeting, they must not be admitted until the situation is clear that they have permission to attend the event
* In the event of suspicion that an event has been hacked in any way or that someone is in the meeting who shouldn't be there, the suspicious attendee should be speedily removed or if necessary, the event should be shut down immediately and rescheduled to another link – the platform should be contacted and the situation reported – platforms have further advice on security in terms of settings which organisers need to be familiar with;
* Once the debaters have finished speaking, the organiser should create a breakaway room for the judges to complete their marking sheets – after five minutes they can return and give the result – judges need to be aware of the requirement to work efficiently and to time limits – during this time, an impromptu speaking challenge can be held for the speakers and feedback provided by both team coaches
* Schools may organise consent with parents & students for photographs (screenshots) to be taken by a designated staff member for publicity purposes according to their own school policies – but no photography should take place without the express consent of the parents/guardians of any students involved in an event who are in the photographs
* No recording is allowed except for the final
* At the end of the meeting, the meeting host will close the meeting for everyone.

## SECTION E (ROLE OF COORDINATORS):

### COMPETITION COORDINATOR

1. The competition coordinator organises the competition by inviting all Educate Together Secondary Schools to join and by organising schools into groups and a timeline of debate fixtures leading to the National Final.
2. The competition coordinator will organise a general meeting of all school representatives early in the year to approve/amend the rules of the competition for the year, appoint a group coordinator for each group and select motions for the league rounds.
3. The competition coordinator will organise a second general meeting before the quarter-finals to organise motions for the later stages of the competition and to agree a competition coordinator for the subsequent year.

### GROUP COORDINATOR

1. Group coordinators oversee the effective running of a group in the league stages
2. Group coordinators collect the team registration sheets for each team in the group and forwards copies of these to the competition coordinator
3. Group coordinators inform the schools of the debates scheduled for each week/round of the league stages and the deadline dates (the fixture list should be published to schools two weeks before the competition starts and reminders sent by the group coordinator one week before the deadline for any given round)
4. Group Coordinators record the results once the debates are held – results must be submitted on the official results sheets
5. Group coordinators check that all debaters involved in a debate are on the official list of registered debaters for the school – if a school chooses an unregistered debater, they forfeit the debate and three points go to the other team
6. Results should always be forwarded to the group coordinators by the winning team as soon as possible after the debate takes place (or by the home school if it is a draw)
7. Once the final round has been played, the group coordinator works out which two teams are in the top two positions in the group and informs both teams and the competition coordinator that these schools are advancing to the knockout stages.
8. In situations where there are disputes about results or the awarding of points for a debate, the group coordinator will attempt to broker agreement between the sides – if that is not possible, the group coordinator will review reports from the disputing sides and make a final decision – this can include accepting the original result or reorganising a debate another time, – the decision must be proportionate to the situation which arises and with the overall good of the competition in mind.
9. The group coordinator role finishes after the league stages.