

Formal Debates

A formal debate is a kind of contest. You might think that it's a bit like a discussion, but it's not. In discussions, the goal is for people to exchange ideas on issues. You might change your mind after you hear what another person has to say. In a formal debate, the goal is for your team to win the debate by doing a better job of presenting its point of view than the other team does of presenting its point of view. During the debate, you don't ever agree with the other team's perspective.

Basic rules

In a formal debate, there are usually two teams—one for (*pro*) a statement and one against (*con*) it. Each team has two speakers. The speakers take turns presenting. You can't interrupt another speaker or speak when it isn't your turn, and you must always be polite.

Order of presentation

A formal debate has a special order for presentation. This outline shows when each speaker presents and what the main purpose of her or his presentation is. Team A is *for* the statement; Team B is *against* it.

Who	Time	Purpose
Team A Speaker 1	2 minutes	Introduce the topic from Team A's perspective.
Team B Speaker 1	2 minutes	Introduce the topic from Team B's perspective.
Team A Speaker 2	2-5 minutes	Give facts and examples to support Team A's perspective. Explain why Team B's perspective is wrong—this means “thinking on your feet.”
Team B Speaker 2	2-5 minutes	Give facts and examples to support Team B's perspective. Explain why Team A's perspective is wrong—this means “thinking on your feet.”
Discussion	5-10 minutes	All debaters remain seated. The debaters raise their hands and, upon being recognized by the chair/timer, proceed to ask and respond to questions from opponents. All four debaters should show participation.
Break	5 minutes	Debaters use this time to work on their rebuttal/closing statements.
Team A Speaker 1	2-5 minutes	Make a strong conclusion. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both rebuttals sum up their position and point out the basic flaws of the opposition.• NO new arguments can be introduced.• Review critical evidence.• Remind the judges of your arguments, and explain why YOUR team should win, and they should not listen to the other team.
Team B Speaker 1	2-5 minutes	