



Premier's Debating Challenge

Years 5 and 6

Key information

The basics

The Premier's Debating Challenge for Years 5 and 6 is a 1-hour unassisted preparation debating competition in which government schools can enter up to 2 teams with a fee of \$100.00 per team. You'll cooperate with your opponents to pick a date and time that suits you both, and then you'll meet either online or in-person 1 hour and 10 minutes before the debate is due to start. You'll pick the topic together, toss a coin to decide which team is on which side, and then the teams will have 1 hour to prepare their case. During that time they're not allowed any help from any other student or teacher, and they're not allowed to look anything up or use any templates or research—it's just 4 students and blank paper and pens and that's it. Then they'll debate and an adjudicator will announce the winner and give the teams feedback on how to keep improving.

Organising your teams

Your team can have a large squad of students, and they can be from any year in primary school, though in general they'll be in either Year 5 or Year 6. For a debate, only 4 students compete, and then for their next debate it can be a slightly or completely different group of 4. If you have 2 teams, then they need to be made up from separate squads. That means once a student has debated for one team they are banned from ever appearing in a debate for the other team. In the debate itself, 3 students will take turns giving a speech and the 4th student is the team adviser, helping in preparation and during the debate with notes and rebuttal tips.

Organising the debates and adjudicators

Each team gets a draw that shows the 4 other teams they need to debate. The team on the left of the draw is the home team if you're planning a face-to-face debate, but both teachers are equally responsible for contacting each other and planning the debate, so you'll need to get in touch as soon as you can and discuss times, dates, who's booking the adjudicator, etc. It's great for teams to meet in-person if they can, but you can't be forced to travel and plenty of debates will happen online. If a debate is going to be in-person, you need to include a few nearby adjudicators in the planning and choose a time, date and venue that suits everyone. If it's happening online then you can just book an online adjudicator with the organisers once the details are sorted. All 4 debates need to be completed by Week 5 of Term 3, and they can happen out of order if that's easiest.

Topic selections

You'll get a labelled, sealed envelope that contains the topics for each of the debates on your draw. Once the teams are together and ready to go, they should open their envelopes and rank the topics from 1 to 3, with 1 being their favourite. Only the 4 students debating can do that ranking – teachers and other students can't contribute or give advice. Once the teams are ready, any topic ranked 3rd is crossed off, and then the most popular remaining topic is chosen for the debate. If the 2 topics left are equally popular, then you should toss a coin to decide between the topics. Finally, you should toss a coin again to decide who will be the affirmative and the negative. The winner of that coin toss is the affirmative team (they don't get to pick a side). If you're debating online and coin tosses seem a bit silly, you can use www.wheelofnames.com instead. Enter the names of the two schools into the space on the right of the screen, share your screen and then spin the wheel to find out who the affirmative will be.



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Key information (cont.)

Preparation time

If the debate's online, then your team needs to stay on camera but muted for the whole 1 hour of preparation time. If that won't be possible you need to clear it with the other team and the organisers beforehand. Only the 4 debaters can be part of the preparation time, so it's really important that no teacher or other student helps out or even communicates with them during the hour, though it's fine for them to head out one at a time for the bathroom. The teams aren't allowed to use any devices or bring in any research or scaffolding or anything like that – the case has to be planned using only blank stationery and something to keep track of time. They should hand in any phones to you before the preparation starts in line with the NSW Department of Education's policy.

The chairperson and timekeeper

We need you to use the official 'Chairperson and results form' for every debate that you run. Ideally you would get a student to fill in the form and act as chairperson, meaning they read out an introduction at the start of the debate and then introduce each speaker when the adjudicator gives them a sign that they're ready. You'll also need a timekeeper to ring bells during the speeches. They're both great roles for younger students or kids who didn't make the team, but it's also fine if you do them both. For online debates both teams need their own form (there's a different version) and their own chairperson and timekeeper (the other team will be muted so a bell from their room won't be audible.)

During the debate

Starting with the affirmative, the teams will take turns delivering their speeches. The speaking time is 4 minutes, with a warning bell at 3 minutes, 2 bells at 4 minutes, and a slow continuous bell at 5 minutes. Technically the adjudicator has to listen to anything said up to the 5-minute mark, but it's a bad idea to go that long as you risk being cut off mid-sentence. The adjudicator isn't allowed to consider a single word past 5 minutes, so you should teach your team to sit down the second they reach that mark.

Reporting the result

As soon as the debate is over and the adjudicator has announced the winner, write that information on the bottom of the 'Chairperson and results form', take a photo on your phone, and email it to debating@det.nsw.edu.au on the spot. The organisers will record the result and you'll be able to see it online after a day or so along with all the other results for the competition. If you forget to do this and lose the form, just email as many details as you can as soon as you can. Finally, remember that both teams are responsible for sending in the result – don't just assume the other team will do it.

The Speaking Competitions Hub

Everything you'll ever need for the comp (except for the draw which has personal contact information on it) is available at the Speaking Competitions Hub. That includes this competition information, a form to book an online adjudication, a link to check out all the latest results and scoreboards, and a selection of 'Chairperson and results forms' you can download. Bookmark this page so that you can always find everything you need: <https://artsunit.nsw.edu.au/speaking-competitions-hub>



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Additional information

The 2024 calendar

You can do your debates out of order, and you can delay a round as long as you catch up by the end of round 4. It's also fine for zones to organise a day where they gather together to compete in multiple debates – contact the organisers if you'd like some advice on planning those days. Each of the rounds has a theme, and we'll email you some more advice on the kind of topic to expect in those rounds once the draws are done.

Topics theme

Round 1 to be completed by 31 May (Week 5 Term 2)
Round 2 to be completed by 21 June (Week 8 Term 2)
Round 3 to be completed by 26 July (Week 1 Term 3)
Round 4 to be completed by 23 August (Week 5 Term 3)
Knockout finals from September through October
Championships tournament 8 to 12 December

Education
Media and screens
Responsibilities
Health and fitness
General
Various

Progressing through the competition

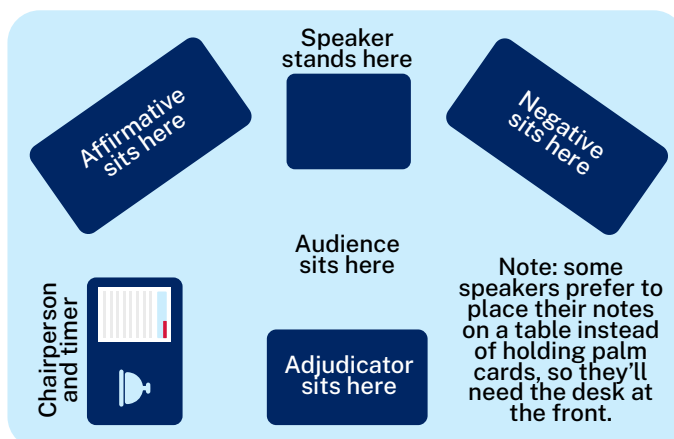
The teams are organised into zones, and your team will have 4 debates against other teams in your zone. At the end of those debates the team, or teams, with the best record are named zone champions, and they compete in a knockout finals series to decide a regional champion. The 10 regional champions meet at a 3-day debating tournament north of Wollongong, and there are costs for the students who make it to that stage of the challenge. The winner of that tournament is named state champions.

Additional support for students

The Premier's Debating Challenge is an inclusive competition. If for whatever reason you have a student that will need some support to allow them to take part, please contact the organisers on (02) 8512 1172 so that we can assist.

In-person debating arrangements

Remember, if you want to run an in-person debate with an adjudicator present you need to include a few adjudicators in the planning – don't just set a date and time and hope someone nearby can make it. As a back-up you can always book an online adjudicator even if both teams are going to be there in-person. As to the debating space itself, here's a sketch as to how you should set that up. Note that you'll also need 2 quiet preparation spaces where the teams can work uninterrupted for 1 hour before the debate. Finally, remember to organise a couple of extra students to act as chairperson and timekeeper. It's fine if a teacher ends up doing those jobs but it's a good opportunity to get younger students involved.





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Additional information (cont.)

Online debating arrangements

Most online debates will use Google Meet, but Microsoft Teams is fine as well, as is any other platform the teachers prefer. Once you've settled on a date and time, set-up an online meeting and save the link to that meeting so you can share it with the other school. Next, head to the Speaking Competitions Hub where you can book an online adjudicator and send the organisers the link which we'll pass on to the adjudicator we assign you. If you're using Google Meet you can re-use the same simple link all year.

Once you've done the topic selections and assigned affirmative and negative, both teams should stay onscreen (but muted) throughout preparation time. If your team is unable to stay onscreen, you need to discuss this with the other teacher and the organisers beforehand. For the debate itself, here's a sketch of what would work best for a simple laptop connection. Note that we're recommending both teams have their own chairperson and timekeeper (it's fine if a teacher fills those roles as long as both venues have someone responsible for keeping time and ringing the bell for their debaters.)



It's a good idea to have the debater who is speaking move away from their team – the team isn't allowed to help during the speech. As the debater who's finished speaking leaves, they can simply mute the laptop and turn it around to face towards the team at their desk and the chairperson. Then when the next debater comes to the front they can turn the laptop back towards them and unmute it. If you have a wall-mounted set-up like a smartboard then obviously that will be fine too – just focus on having the debater speaking near the microphone and the team near wherever the sound comes out.

Online troubleshooting

If a speech starts to break up in a way that makes it difficult to hear, you or the adjudicator should unmute and interrupt. The timer should stop, and then the speaker should re-start the chunk of their speech that broke up, with the timer making generous allowance for the break. If it seems like the internet is spotty, you can try turning off the cameras so that you're only transmitting sound. Often that cleans up the sound and it's really all that's needed for the debate to work. Honestly a simple conference call on the teachers' phones will work in a pinch. Finally, if the technology fails and the debate needs to be abandoned for the day the teams should keep all their preparation work and contact the organisers for advice on how to proceed. Finally, if the problem is with the adjudicator's connection, you can record the meeting and then send the recording to the organisers. We'll record an adjudication and separate feedback videos for both teams.



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Rules summary

1. In any given debate a team will field four members. Those members can change from debate to debate, so a team can be made up of a large squad of students. The students in this Years 5 and 6 competition can be from any year in primary school.
2. Where a school has entered two teams, a student must not appear in both of those teams, so the first team must have a different and separate squad from second the team. Once a student has appeared for the first team they may not appear for the second team later in the competition, and vice versa.
3. Of the four members of the team, three will speak and one will act as the team adviser in the preparation room and during the debate.
4. The speaking time for the Years 5 and 6 competition is 4 minutes. There will be a warning bell at 3 minutes, two bells at 4 minutes and a continuous bell at 5 minutes.
5. Teams will have 60 minutes in which to prepare their case.
6. Teams are not allowed to take mobile phones into the preparation rooms. If students have phones, they must be handed to a teacher before preparation begins for safekeeping.
7. Teams must not take any notes, templates or research into the preparation rooms. Only pens, blank paper and cards, and a timer are allowed. The use of a whiteboard is also permitted.
8. Teams should stay on camera but muted throughout the preparation time for online debates. If that won't be possible teachers need to clear that with the other team and the Speaking Competitions Officer before the debate.
9. Teams are not allowed any assistance during the 60 minutes of preparation. Teachers and other students who aren't on the team may not give any advice or help in any way, and should not communicate with the team except to give them a warning about how much time has passed or to tell them that preparation is over.
10. Once a speaker begins their speech the team isn't allowed to help them, and the timer will continue unless interrupted by an external factor like a school bell or a technical issue with an online debate (as opposed to the speaker needing to pause for any reason).
11. Any disputes regarding any aspect of the conduct of a debate must be forwarded in writing to the Speaking Competitions Officer within a week of the problem arising.
12. If a debate has not been held before the deadline to have all rounds completed, the Speaking Competitions Officer may award a win on forfeit to whichever team they deem to have made the better effort to organise the debate, or may instead award a loss to both teams.

Contact details

You can contact the organisers of the competition for advice about organising your debates or any other aspect of debating whenever you need a hand. We're at (02) 8512 1172 or you can email debating@det.nsw.edu.au. Finally, just a reminder that pretty much everything you'll ever need to compete in our speaking competitions is available online at the Speaking Competitions Hub: <https://artsunit.nsw.edu.au/speaking-competitions-hub>