

Introduction to Debating

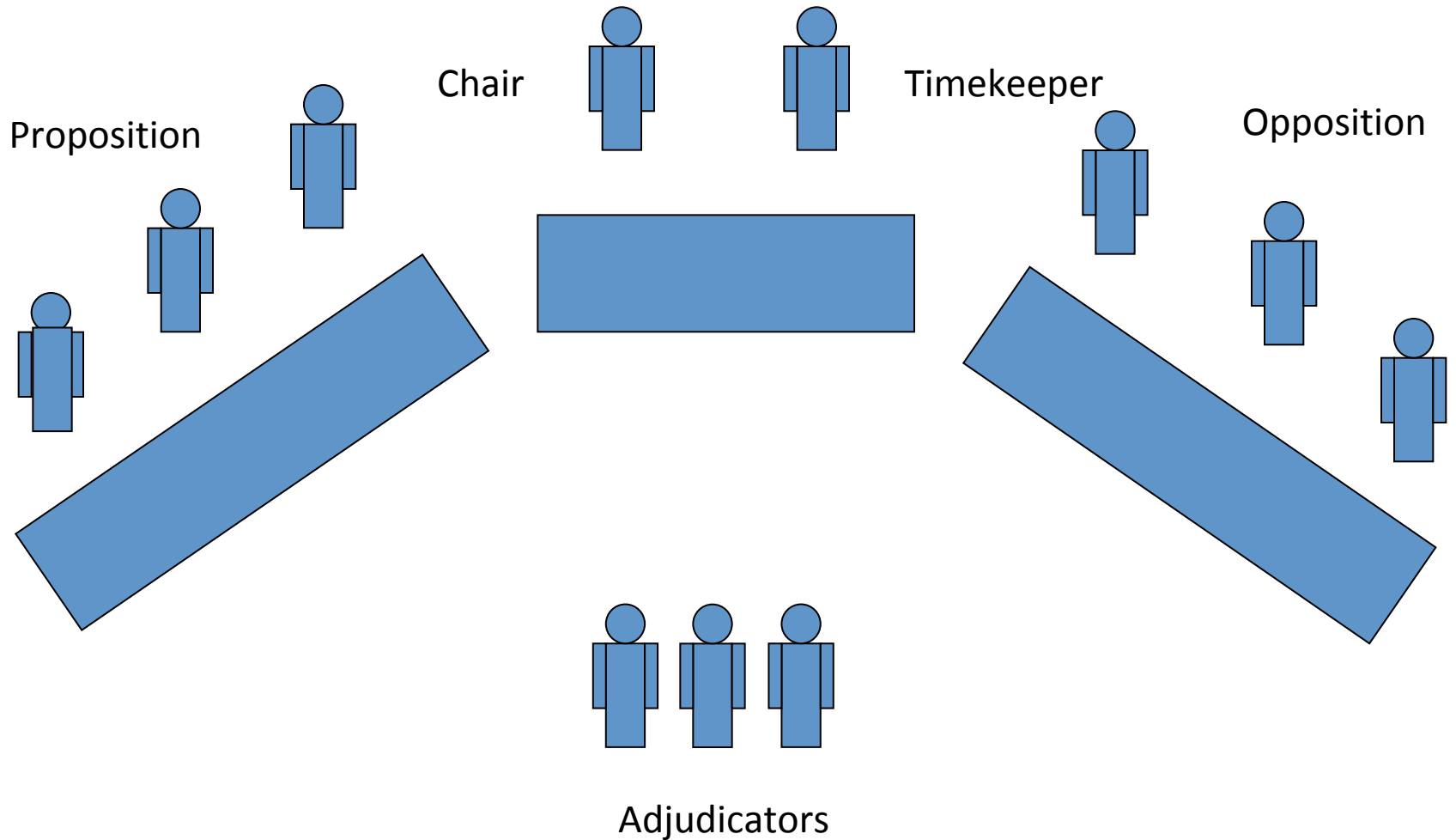
(WSDC Format)



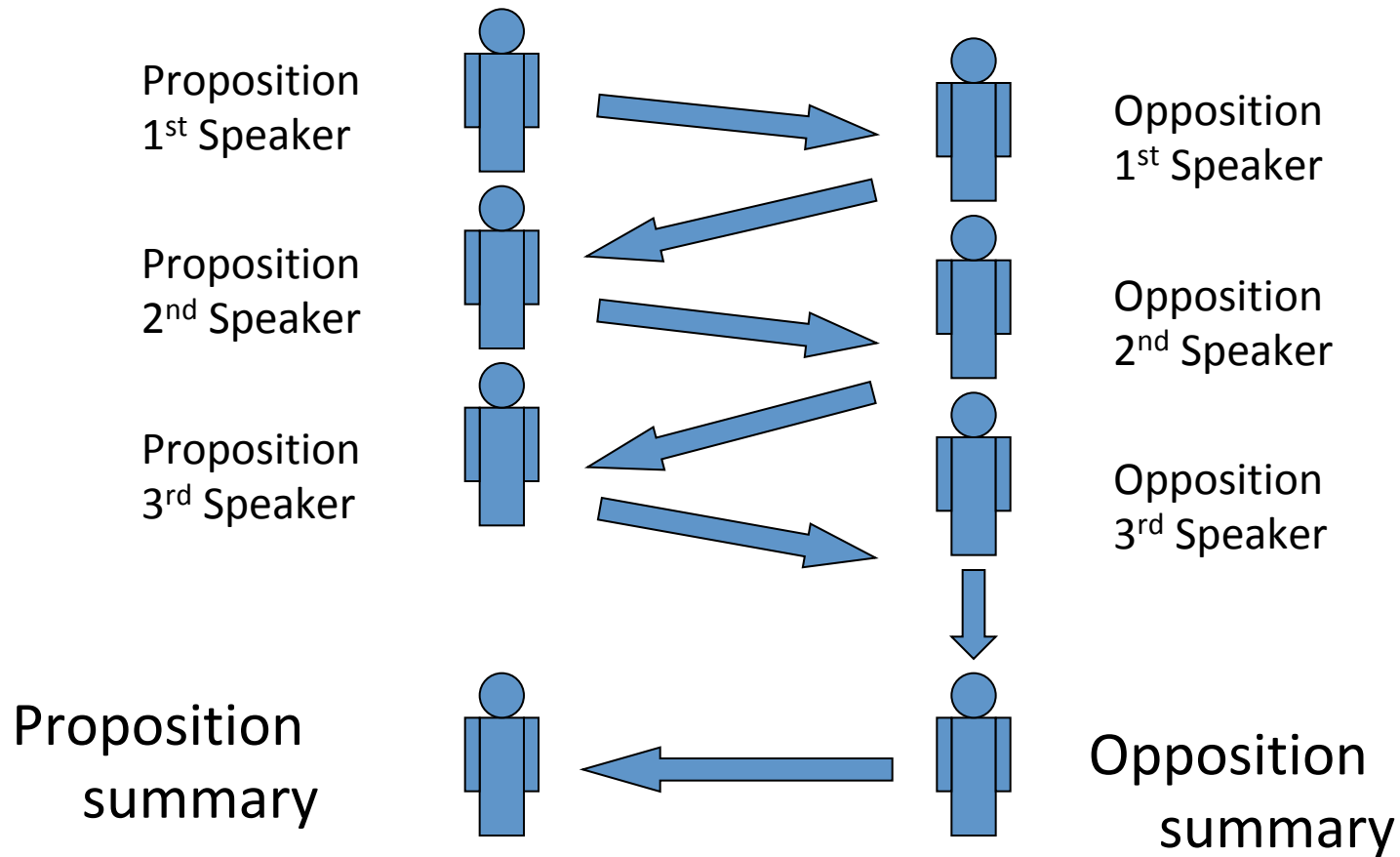
What is it?

- Competition of ideas
- Politeness, respect for opponents, judges, the activity
- Constructive disagreement
- Use argument and logic
- Avoid lying and falsification

The Debate



Order of speakers



Speech Lengths

- Main speeches are of six minutes in length.
- The first and last minutes are marked by signals from the timekeeper.
- In between those signals members of the other team may offer a speaker 'Points of Information'.
- Summary speeches are four minutes in length with no points of information.

What is a Point of Information?

- A point of information is a request to briefly interrupt the speaker currently 'holding the floor' with a question, observation or argument relevant to what is being said at the time.
- The speaker may choose to accept or decline the point of information.
- Offering and accepting some points of information shows that the speaker is engaged with the debate and able to think quickly about their arguments and those of their opponents.

Speaker Roles

Proposition – 1st Speaker

- Introduction (set the context of this debate)
- Define crucial or ambiguous terms (no need of dictionary definitions)
- Introduce model (simple, clear, short – some debates don't require a model)
- Two major arguments, well developed
- Conclusion

Opposition – 1st Speaker

- Introduction: flag your main point of difference
- Analyse proposition's interpretation and give your own interpretation. You can propose:
 - remain with status quo
 - propose alternate solution
 - deny the existence of the problem
- Refute major points of previous speaker
- Present two major arguments from your own side

Proposition – 2nd Speaker

- Introduction
- Refute major arguments by previous speaker
- Rebuild your original arguments (don't repeat what first speaker said. Add new analysis - "Why was it right?")
- Present one new major argument

Opposition – 2nd Speaker

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- Refute major arguments by previous speaker
- Rebuild your original major argument (don't repeat what first speaker said. Add new analysis – “Why was it right?”)
- Present one new major argument

Proposition – 3rd Speaker

- Purpose: set the stage for the decision to be made
- Introduction
- Identify three main clash points in debate (what were three big questions that will determine the outcome)
- Analyse why Proposition won those three clashes

Opposition – 3rd Speaker

- Purpose: set the stage for the decision to be made
- Introduction
- Identify three main clash points in debate (what were three big questions that will determine the outcome)
- Analyse why Opposition won those three clashes

Opposition – Sum up

- Introduction (short)
- Summarize the debate in a way that makes it look like you win, but seem objective
- Restructure debate around 2 big questions or clashes
- Conclusion (short)
- Speech is 4 minutes

Proposition – Sum up

- Introduction (short)
- Summarize the debate in a way that makes it look like you win, but seem objective
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Motions/Topics

The Motion

- In recognition of the Parliamentary origins of debating, the audience are taken to form 'the House', and so all motions begin "This House..."
- Today's motion is:

"This House would make smokers pay for their own medical expenses"

How to read a motion

- Defining a motion is about giving a clear explanation of what the motion means to ensure that all speakers and judges are clear on the topic being debated

This House would allow corporal punishment in schools

The definition for this motions should include:

Who will deliver the punishment?

Will it be the school nurse, a head of discipline, any given teacher

Who can issue the punishment?

Will it be only senior staff/ all staff?

What is the punishment?

Caning/slapping/ pinching

What can the punishment be given for?

Serious breaches of behavior such as violence/ repeated ignoring of the uniform policy or can it be issued at a teachers' discretion?

- If a motion has an obvious meaning, then that should be pursued

This House would teach Intelligent Design in schools

This motion is about teaching students about the belief that life was designed by an intelligent creator, not a motion about thinking intelligently about your art projects whilst students are designing them.

- The debate should not be place or time set, unless specified in the words of the motion

This House would legalise the sale and consumption of recreational drugs

This is a debate about modern day nations. It would not be fair to define it as 1960's America prior to the war on drugs regardless of whether you believed it would make it easier for your side.

Whilst examples can be useful to give clarity to your definition (e.g. *"we would allow their sale and consumption within private homes and cafés specifically set up for them, similar to the Dutch model for cannabis"*) they should not restrict a reasonable discussion of the topic.

- What do the important words in the motion mean and are the specifics obvious?

This House believes that the United Nations has failed

In this debate specific criteria for failure should be given.

Do you want the criteria to be preventing war, ignoring human rights abuses or inefficient decision making procedures?

Types of Motions

- Not all debates are proposing a specific policy or an action
- Some of the motions are statements about the world of which the truth should be contested

Policy vs. Truth Debates

Policy debate

- When the motion implies that a specific actor should or should not do a certain policy

This house would require university students to work in their country of origin for a number of years after graduation

The motion suggests that governments should implement this as a policy and will require explanation of how exactly that works and what the policy will look like.

- The actor need not necessarily be a government, can be an individual or an organization

THW not consume art created by people who have committed deeply immoral acts.

In this debate you are still advocating a specific course of action but the actor is implied as individuals rather than governments.

Truth Debates

- When you need not propose a specific course of action, but instead, merely argue the truth or falsity of the statement

This house regrets the media focus on the personal lives of politicians

In this debate speakers need only argue that the media focus is regrettable or not regrettable, they are not required to propose a specific method of reducing the focus or whether that method would be effective or problematic in practice.

- Arguments on the practical aspects of a motion will strengthen your case, but the focus should be on the principle of the motion, by analysing the values associated with the motion on either side

Case Construction

Preparation

1. Think about what the major issues in the debate will be and what you have to prove to win
2. Brainstorm as many issues/ideas as possible around the topic
3. Structure the ideas you come up with into arguments (some ideas might be grouped together into one argument).
4. Flesh out the arguments (we'll come back to this)
5. Allocate the arguments to speakers
6. Work out the team split.

All in 30 minutes... (International tournaments: 1 hour)

Developing an Argument

- Argument, Analysis, Evidence – the way of making arguments.
- Example: “THW use more nuclear power”

Argument: “It is better for the environment”

Analysis: “Nuclear power does not produce CO₂, unlike fossil fuels. CO₂ causes global warming, so we so should try to reduce its production. Therefore, nuclear power is better for the environment”

Evidence: “Countries like France who rely heavily on nuclear power are much closer to meeting their commitments to reduce CO₂ emissions under the Kyoto treaty than countries like Germany who do not use nuclear power”

In a Nutshell

- There is no right or wrong argument
- The focus is on logically explaining a position

