**How to Conduct a Class Debate**

**Introduce the topic**

All **debates** start with a [***topic***](https://www.procon.org/debate-topics/), or *resolution*. Often, this resolution is a proposed course of action that one team will argue for and another will argue against. Choose a topic to which your participants can relate and perhaps one with practical application. You can make the topic less serious (*we should call all seals Sammy*) or more serious (*climate change will negatively affect the next generation*). In any case, be sure that you understand the issue and any specialized vocabulary that goes with it.

**Assign the Affirmative and the Negative**

**There are two sides to any debate**. Naturally, one will argue for and another against the resolution. It is best to **group your participants into teams to research and argue the issue** rather than expecting one person to do all the work. This way one person does not have all the pressure to perform, and the other members of the group can help with comprehension and strategy. Group one will argue for the issues being presented. The other group will be the negative and will argue against the resolutions. During the debate, you will need extra participants to serve as the *judges* and decide which side presented a stronger case voting for the *winners* of the debate at its *conclusion*.

**Give Time for Research**

Participants will need additional instruction on the specific vocabulary and facts that may be involved with the topic. Make sure all of your participants understand any specialized vocabulary so the efficacy of their arguments does not depend on simple comprehension. Encourage each group to form a strategy as to who will do most of the talking during the debate though remind them that all of them are expected to participate in the research and strategy of the debate. Then, during the preparation time in anticipation of the *rebuttal*, your participants should discuss with their teams the points the opposition made and decide how to refute them.

**Keep Track of Time**

If you are unfamiliar with *formal debate*, the speakers follow a set order. The following is the **most basic of debate structure:**

* + First, the affirmative group receives two minutes to present their case to the audience.
  + The negative group then receives two minutes to present their case.
  + After both sides have a chance to speak, both teams receive two minutes to prepare a *rebuttal* and *summary*.
  + The order of speech is reversed now and the negative side presents their rebuttal and summary for the first two minutes.
  + The last to speak is the affirmative team who then presents their rebuttal and summary for two minutes.
  + You can repeat the rebuttal stage again
  + Both teams then summarize
  + The debate is now concluded.

**Make a judgement**

Usually in debate, the *winner* is the one who has presented the strongest case. Participants will probably want to know who won. To determine the *winner*, have the *audience*vote on which team they thought made the most convincing *argument*. With this, weigh your own opinion as to who communicated clearly and refuted the opponent’s arguments best. This combination will identify your winners.