Debate Guide - A dive into the nuances

An introduction to the rhetoric world of arguments - Ethan

Coming from a scholar which only recently got any debate achievements to back this up, but not even the best debater on our team

Welcome scholars, to a preview of what debate's going to look like in the World Scholar's Cup! This is by far, the most famous event in this competition, with it being the main representation of WSC outside of the community itself. It's one of the more important events in the competition, giving 3500 points per person and putting the 2500 for writing to shame. The challenge, however recently, has bumped its status up to 4000 points per. Keep on studying, everyone!

Debate rankings. Oh, the more debatable. Some of the best debaters I've met have unfortunately faced rankings deep within the 200s. It's an incredibly controversial topic among the community, particularly the competition debaters I've met. Something to mention is that many people in this program face the same problem, and getting a much worse ranking is nothing but normal for the situation. Don't worry about the nuances, everybody is figuring it out.

The reason for this jumble of scoring is because of a simple reason. Standardization. While many formal debate competitions have trained judges for the purpose of fairness, the Scholar's Cup relies almost solely on parents. As such, expectations and deviations are prone to happen much more than one may believe. Judges will not only judge you on what is expected, but their determining factors as well, ranging from different styles and tactics, level of English understanding, and more. They may even ignore the whole debate and use their gut feeling.

What this unfortunately means is that it's impossible to make a guide which will tell one how to ensure a success in the Scholar's Cup Debate. We know little about how the debates are marked by the judges, nor how the scores are calculated. Solely the 63 points a scholar can score from all 3 debates is not enough to deduce the hundreds of rankings. While the Showcase can showcase successful examples of debate, that's something I'll discuss here.

The criteria in WSC are clear and laid out, a possible lead on how we can prepare ourselves and learn how to debate in this program. Content, Style, and Presentation. This gives an idea on how judges mark their debates, although it differs. This guide is meant to walk through these Criteria and suggest ways to fulfill them, as well as an extensive application section which goes through what the real implications and process will require and be like.

Debate Format

Format
The debate works with two teams against each other, an affirmative(Positive) and a negative. You work with your team with debates, so there is no worry of having to collaborate with other people - that is, however false if your team is recently mixed. There tend to be 3 people on each side, although in rare circumstances will a team of 2 be seen.

A motion is given out after a list of instructions are recited from the judge, and all of the rules are explained. After which, you have 15 minutes to prepare for the motion you receive, in which you are allowed to use the internet and devices. However, upon reaching the end of the preparation time, devices are no longer permitted.

Each debater has to speak once, and they get up to 4 minutes to speak. It is highly recommended to use as much time as possible developing an argument. In this time, no POIs nor interruptions can be made, aka protected time. After which, 1 minute is given each for the other team to prepare for the next speaker to talk. Teams alternate debating.

After all speakers are done, there is a 90 second gap period before each team has to give feedback to the other team. In this period, you do not keep arguing the points, like I've seen before. The judge will then announce the winner but give no feedback.

Scoring

Each speaker is scored out of three criteria: Content, Style, and Presentation. All of them are out of 7 marks, where 2 is the lowest and 7, the highest. This renders a total possible score of 21.

Judges also must nominate a best speaker from the team. That speaker has the chance to be nominated a “Wow!” by the judge circling a bubble in, signalling they’ve impressed the judge who believes they would impress an audience full of people. This marks a nomination from such a judge to speak at the Debate Showcase event.

Note that many people get nominated, yet only a select few make it into the showcase. These are people nominated by all 3 judges they encounter. There also is only 1 “Wow” for a team, so even if two teammates are great, only one is nominated.

Every team is scored for an additional 7 points for Teamwork and Feedback, accounting for 14 total points. This means a team requires to work well together in order to bring higher team awards. These do not count for individual marks.

This means the maximum score for a team is 203, for the 3 63s from each person and the 14 other points.

Scoring factors - Who Wins?

The question on how the points for the Debate are weighed is one the community has been through multiple times. And while there have been many clues given, there isn’t a definite answer. However, having asked judges, there are a couple of determinations which are possible.

There are, of course, a number of “scores” possible less than the scholar count. However, deviations are made for how nice a judge is. When they go through the counselling section, WSC gets to know how nice a certain judge is. While it is impossible to know what they do with the information, it certainly weighs points and individual placement. (I wish I knew!)

With this, there are possibly an infinite number of outcomes and scores. Because the score is out of 3500, the difference between scholars can be from fractional to hundreds. Ties do occur (Like a 45 way tie for 893rd in the Senior Beijing Global 2019) but they're quite uncommon. There have been deviations of scholar's losing by mere points to the winning scholar being a hundred points ahead of the runner-up.

Regardless, know that more lenient judges will tend to give points which will be worth less than strict judges. A strict judge's 19/21 is more valuable than a lenient one's 21/21 in many cases. This means you cannot relax in any of the debates, regardless if the judge is nice or mean to you. This at least, ensures the judges aren't as skewed as many think, although it can feel morally degrading for lenient judges whose points aren't considered as much.

On the topic of who wins a debate. The points a team scores, in many cases, don't matter to judges at all. Whether you win or lose a debate will not affect your overall individual score. The first place debate scholar may be from a team which didn't win any of their debates. The judges aren't told to add up the points to determine who they win, so even if some do, many will rely on their gut feeling and impression on people to determine the winner. Winning debates don't equate to getting better results. - This point is courtesy of another scholar.

Speaker roles

Which Speaker are you?
All speakers in a debate play a very important role, whether it be introducing everyone to the topic, adding interpretations of an idea, or summing up a team's case, everybody is equally as important as one another in the world of debate, especially in the Scholar's Cup. There is a common misconception that "The Third Speaker is the most important one", but this is just completely untrue.

Some believe that the third speaker should be the best speaker in order to summarize the team's case the best, and the second speaker should be the worst in a team because "Second Speakers don't matter". However, this is certainly not how a team

should go with organizing speakers. The most successful teams have people who fit the roles of what the speakers need.

(It helps to add that I am a second speaker)

I'll give a little overview of each speaker and what they specifically contribute to any given debate, as well as whether or not you want to be one.

First Speaker: The Introduction
The first speaker is of course, the first speaker. They have two main goals: To set up the foundation of the debate and provide the strongest points.

First of all, they are the one who gives the outlook onto the rest of the debate. They give a roadmap, discussing the points their other teammates will be speaking on, as well as build the first pieces of an argument and define the terms given in the motion. They're making the case clear so the judge can interpret it in a way which benefits them. They should not weigh the case and details in a clearly biased way, but make implications which convince the judge.

As well, they should provide the STRONGEST POINTS in a debate. The foundation of an argument needs to be set with the first speaker, which includes the best point. This gives a team a good head start on another on the condition the other team started with weaker points. The best point is not meant to be some emergency weapon a third speaker uses in a kamikaze attempt to win back the debate, it is a tool for success which we can use at the start.

This role is best suited for those who are organized, however speak strongly for a point. They must truly believe in the motion they are arguing, or the point they provide will not be nearly as convincing. They should expect to define how their team will move through the case.

Second Speaker: The Detail

This is known in the debate world as the most useless speaker, although that's certainly untrue. All speakers are useful in different ways. The second speaker's goal is to elaborate, elaborate.

While it's nice to have a point introduced and discussed a little, the details are where you unlock a judge's understanding and connection. If just giving a point, such a judge does not know what benefit they personally receive by agreeing or disagreeing with the point. Giving elaborations, whether it be restating points or creating new ones, is what the Second Speaker does, taking the judge on a journey through the world created in 15 minutes by a bunch of teenagers.

Stories, details, examples, metaphors. A debate fundamentally means to argue in a formalized way such as to convince one, a judge, to agree with your points. Not only does a team believe they support a motion, they want more people to believe it. And with the Second Speaker, comes the emotional impacts and stories which will weigh the judge towards one side over another. To bring the debate in a direction which you weigh towards.

This role is best suited for a person who can speak details and emotion. The manifestation of a second speaker needs for them to provide examples and interpretation, so having detail and emotional appeal when speaking is a must.

Third Speaker: The Conclusion

The third speaker is the final one on your side of the debate. This speaker's goal is to summarize everything the first two speakers have said to prove their side right.

After a whole debate of bickering between two sides of an argument, the judge doesn't want to try and squeeze all of the details and information in their minds. It's a burden which will end up losing team points. Instead, they want a summary, something to remind them about what the whole debate ran around. That's what the third speaker helps the judge learn.

These speakers do not need to be the best speaker on a team. However, they do need to be a good speaker in order to summarize the entire case in a point, although being a good speaker applies to all others. They summarize a team's case as well as make the final rebuttal against the other team. With this, they need to be able to write down a speech quickly and improv well, as the preparation time they receive will not bring their entire speech through.

On the topic of summarizing the whole debate, it helps to simplify all points into two or three areas for the third speaker to discuss. This makes points far more organized for the debate judges, and allows for more clarity and organization. These are known as "Themes" in formal debate.

Those best suited for this role are those who can adapt easily and perform improv speaking fluently. Being a third speaker requires one to form rebuttals and interpretations of points while speaking or in the period of the other speakers, without losing track of the debate.

Foundations

What is a foundation?
This is a part of the debate done by the first speaker of a team. It is not required, but used by many debate teams to make explaining their case much easier and faster. Creating a foundation for a case will allow a judge to understand the basic fundamentals of what your team will argue for, and what relation it has to the motion.

Many already use it unknowingly to certain extents, whether it be adding the definitions they heard about from a friend and adapted into their debate or whatnot. However, this can arguably be the most important part of a debate, setting a judge on the same track as the team. This is so much more than just giving a few definitions and moving on.

I'll be using the motion "BIRT: AI should replace teachers in the future"

Definitions

These are the most commonly associated with the idea of foundations, and simply means to identify the common and useful keywords within a motion. This is very easy for some words, and a lot trickier for others.

This is usually only done by the first affirmative speaker. However, if they decide to make the definitions unfair or forget to do them, the first negative speaker can do so.

AI is fairly simple to define; being Artificial Intelligence. In the Enactment section of foundations, one may state this AI is intelligent enough to replace teachers, but this is a small nuance.

Teachers is a more complicated term, and it's up to the first speaker, notably the first affirmative speaker to mention. What kind of teacher? Should AI replace university professors? Elementary teachers? Preschool teachers? The motion changes a lot between these types of teachers, and a team may be incredibly handicapped if the definition is assumed to be something.

Without definitions, teams will assume the other team knows what they believe it is. Definitions can also be skewed towards a team with an unfair judgement, and it is important to address when it happens.

There was a situation in a debate showcase which I once saw about mistakes with the motion "Resolved that a mistake should not be forgiven for a third time" and the affirmative defined mistakes as a critical crucial error which could injure and kill many. Wow, talk about a lot.

Roadmapping

This is similar to a thesis statement in an essay. This sounds boring, but it is one of the most important parts of a debate case as a whole. This, done by all speakers (but the first in a notable way), and essentially outlines what a person as well as their team is going to be doing in a debate.

This is also known as signposting, and gives the judge a preview into their case, which in turn makes it easier for them to follow through your debate. While it seemed mundane at first, it indeed ended up being incredibly useful, scoring us higher points than what we previously had.

The first speaker will review over every single point a team will make in a debate, and match these points in chronological order, stating whether or not it will be expressed by the first or second speaker. They will then finally address the third speaker, and talk about what they will bring to the table. The second and third speaker, however, still have to roadmap as well. They go through a rundown of the points they will discuss as well as rebut.

This doesn't have to be the whole "I, as the first speaker, will be talking about..." ordeal. Judges still want to be engaged! Instead, something along the lines of "In this debate, we explore many nuances and ideas. A couple of ones I would like to discuss are..." would be more entertaining and appealing to the judge. While roadmapping may seem boring at first, when getting used to them, they can be adapted in ways which continue to flow in a debate well.

Enactment

These relate to definitions, as something they are treated as extensions to such. However, the enactment of a motion is something completely different, and should be treated as such. The enactment runs through how the motion will be enacted, how the events will play out for the motion to run and be set in place, or not.

The enactment is something that many forget to mention. It is only required in policy debates, something I'm not so certain about myself. What even are they? Not a clue. Enactments are, however, useful in all debate scenarios, especially if odds can be stacked against you. This is done by roadmapping how, if the motion were to fall or stand, would actually be executed.

In the hypothetical motion of teachers and AI, an enactment could be: "*When we replace teachers with AIs, we intend to do so in a way which is as ethical as possible. This includes training such AIs for years to rid it of biases and suiting them to be able*

to adapt to children. Existing teachers which would be replaced will also have easier access to new related jobs".

This is certainly not the best enactment, as it could be considered as "squirreling", meaning to weigh a motion to one's favour in an unfair way. However, it does a good job of pre-tackling the idea of ethics, especially whether the AI would be suited for children and if teachers would have jobs anymore.

Enactments don't mean as much to judges as definitions do in almost every circumstance. However, spending a bit of time showing you put thought into making ideas of how a motion would be enacted or not can possibly convince a judge you believe in the motion.

Success Factor

One sentence can save a debate. This is a simple tactic, yet nobody remembers to use it. And when they forget, they lose. The success factor asks the question of "What is a fair way to judge this debate?" In some cases, the success factor is negligible, as it is a simple case of "Does this benefit the world or not" while in other cases, it is a lot more complicated.

A simple example could be the same Teachers and AI example. If AIs replacing teachers would benefit the world or not. It's intuitive enough for the judge and both teams to agree upon.

However, an example of the Success Factor being crucial to mention could be with the motion "Learning from mistakes is overrated". If you are on the affirmative side, it could be devastating as judges could interpret the motion and a speech as the affirmative claiming that people "Shouldn't learn from mistakes".

However, if we address the Success Factor with the first speaker, setting the factor from "We shouldn't learn from mistakes" to "We should think of learning from mistakes less and learning in other ways" to balance out the debate more. This gives the affirmative a chance of winning, because the judge now takes in a different view of what they originally assumed of the motion.

So essentially, make sure to address what the winning factor is. What determines if you, or the opposing team wins? And you want to try to make it as simple and fair as possible.

Arguments

The meaning of an argument
Arguing is often associated with the sight of two random people bickering statements at each other rapidly. From the likes of insults to points which are poorly formed, this is what many think of arguments. How could this be any different? To understand arguments, one must understand the meaning of a debate again. To convince people. A judge. The audience. And to do that, one must understand and formulate their argument.

There's no simple "Wing it and hope everything goes well". Every single debater you see go on the podium has a format they use, whether they express it or not. Even third speakers, yes the people best suited for summarization use point based ideas as well. And formulation helps for one simple reason. Because it helps you organize your thoughts.

When one begins debating from what I've seen, they tend not to put much effort into understanding their point. At this point, it seems too difficult to form an argument! When listening to the experienced debaters, they ramble on about details, which in turn gets these not as experienced debaters to start exercising the same routine. Except the experienced debaters weren't rambling on detail. They had a format.

Points DON'T HAVE TO BE a boring spreadsheet one may get at school for writing essays. While the fundamentals stay the same, there is no need to be restricted in a speech. In fact, being stuck to the foundation of a point makes the speech sound unconvincing and monotonous, something the judges nor your teammates want to hear. This format can adapt in many ways to suit one's speaking style. It just needs to be done right.

Now, an error I've made is calling this a format. This is nowhere near that, just the three simple questions to ask when presenting an argument. The three pillars of a point. And let's use the motion "BIRT: AI should replace teachers in the future" again.

Claim: What do you want to express?
This is the most fundamental part of a point. What is specifically the thing you want to address and tell the judge, audience, and everyone about? I've seen many failures, whether it be myself, my teammates, or opponents with this. We ramble on with a point we never told anyone. These tend to be one sentence long for simplicity.

No matter how good one is at speaking or convincing, having a point set in stone is crucial. Without this foundational piece of an argument, the details and thoughts will warp around the general area of what one believed is their point and they could speak of something completely unrelated. This can still happen while having a point, which is why it's important to know how to form the details of the given point.

An example of a claim for the teachers and AI motion could be: *"AIs are a better option than teachers when it comes to stress and work."*

Evidence: Why is what you said true?
This is a piece which most good debaters in Scholar's Cup nail. The evidence to a point, and what makes what one claims, "right". There isn't much of a Right or Wrong when it comes to debating; however one should aim to convince the audience that what they believe is truly the right perspective to take, or that it is a better viewpoint than their opposition.

A claim without any evidence is known as a "hanging claim", and is usually rebutted or ignored by the opposing team and audiences. If one wants the judge to believe what they state, they must give good reasons to believe them. It's a situation of "Cool idea, but why should we believe you?" In this scenario, you must pretend everyone has not a clue what you are talking about.

With evidence, it heavily depends on what the motion and claim is. Sometimes, it has to be factual data and websites(Which note, you can fake and nobody will notice), while in other cases it can revolve around hypothetical scenarios, specifically when dealing with ethics.

An example from the motion with the given claim is: *"From a study from Berkeley University, we see that in teaching, stress and overworking is a major issue with teachers nowadays. In the future, when technology is possible, we can use AI to replace teachers, and thus relax them.*"

Meaning: How does it impact the motion?
This section is often overlooked, or merged with the evidence section. However, this is something that is incredibly important to a construct. You've just spent the last minute talking about a random point about teachers being overwhelmed by work. But why does this connect to AIs replacing teachers? Why would it benefit the motion, why does it mean the motion should stand?

While it is easy to make this association in a speaker's head, the listeners will have a difficult time deciphering it, and that includes a judge. Without this justification of a point, it has a significantly harder time standing, especially when the judge is too stressed themselves to piece together the parts one didn't justify. The other team can also mention that one didn't connect the dots together, and completely rule out a point.

It asks the question of "Ok, we believe your point, but why does this mean I should believe in the motion?" It is an association which many miss, leaving the judge hanging on incomplete work. No matter how smart the judge is, it is always difficult for them to make a connection to the motion. Especially because there are many ways to do so, and they don't know how you wanted to connect it.

An example from the given claim would be: "*This in turn, gives the children a less volatile work environment and can promote positivity while cutting out possible disturbances with stress and overwork with teachers. Nobody deserves to be under the difficulties of teaching.*"

Rebuttals

What even is a rebuttal?
A rebuttal is a voice against something presented primarily by the opposing team in a debate. This could either include a point they were discussing, or a rebuttal they addressed against your point which you didn't agree with. While some may not like to perform them, all speakers (with exceptions of the first affirmative) will be rewarded for doing so.

Rebutting shows that one has capability of understanding a point and making a counter-argument within a short period of time. It tests the improvisation section of a debate which isn't seen elsewhere, being scrapped within a small period of time. It's something which many struggle with, and it's certainly understandable. It's difficult to come up with a "comeback" in only the minute of gap time you have before one must present themselves.

And then the execution. It's always the odd one out when it comes to debate, because it hasn't been run through. And with this, it can either last 10 seconds or the whole debate. Rebuttals are easy to rumble on with, and are also easy to miss completely under the stress of frantically noting the points the opposition made.

Rebuttals shouldn't be a main focus in any speech. The judge wants to hear your point more than they want to hear one addressing a point from the other team. The primary objective of a speech should be to convince the judge one's belief is right, not that any other thought on the matter is wrong. And this mistake many, including most debaters, make when first doing the Scholar's Cup Debate. Remember, these are parents.

What to Address
Put simply, rebuttals are meant to address an opponent's point or claim. However, there are some other additions to address in a rebuttal when one does a speech. Remember to always take accurate notes of what a speaker says, misinterpreting their point and rebutting the wrong idea will lose marks easily and in debate, is known as strawmanning.

The main priority of a rebuttal are the Claims that the opposing side makes. The evidence and meaning can be brought up, but make sure to specifically state that this information under the claim so a judge can easily associate what with what.

Remember, points are a priority. While a detail one could've made was funny and inaccurate, ask if dismantling that detail helps take down a point. Because there are only 4 minutes to speak, budgeting the time you have for a rebuttal is crucial. When listening to the opposition speak, write down the direct contentions they are speaking of, and then add small details they give, specifically ONLY THE ONES which will help you.

What not to Address

Details, yes, are important, but are also the bane of rebuttals. They're simply filler which wastes time during a debate. Detailing a point is crucial to convince judges, but addressing the same details in a rebuttal makes much less difference in the situations. I've done BP debate before, and had a rebuttal which went for 4 minutes and 30 seconds before.

Always ask yourself the question: "Is what I'm rebutting contributing to the debate?" Of course details are necessary in rebuttals to entice the audience when speaking, but when one starts to pull on the chains of small information, they start bouldering down. So, always hold a comically big "Watch out for rocks" sign when debating.

Additionally, when you rebut, you want to directly counter the points with a thought instead of adding extra troubles to the pot. These mishaps of rebutting are known as "Hanging Conterpoints", and can cause confusion when it comes to debating.

An example of a rebuttal which wouldn't particularly stand could be this one against this point: *"Cleopatra wasn't black, they were white, and thus misrepresenting them as so can be offensive to the culture and stories of the Egyptians"* regarding the Cleopatra controversy.

The given rebuttal was: "*Cleopatra wasn't white. If you can't get it right, how can Netflix?*"

This unfortunately doesn't tackle the point of misrepresentation of the Egyptians, it just adds problems to the situation. This isn't where one should aim for a rebuttal, as it doesn't address the point in a way which dismantles it. It simply stacks more problems to deal with later. This is specifically named "tu quoque", where one responds to criticism with more criticism.

So in general, details are an okay thing when rebutting a point, only bring ones which will help prove your point and disprove the opponent's. Otherwise, catch every single claim the opponent gives and try your best to improvise a problem with such. The one exception I could imagine is if a team expresses 17 small points in an array of unknown garbage. Then, attempt to sort the main, most important points for their case and dismantle them.

Introductions

The purpose of introductions

Picture this. You're a judge for debate who doesn't have much of a clue what debate is about, and is now listening to the third debate. Of course, they're bored, having had teenagers confront them and speak nonsense for hours. This is the scenario of judging everybody will face in the World Scholar's Cup. And in this scenario, you must convince the tired judge to listen to you.

The introduction is a soft buffer before a point. It prevents one from straight-up jumping into a claim or contention, and gives the audience some time to perceive their thoughts. Within an introduction, we have the hook and roadmap, the two things to dive in with this section. Hooks are meant to catch someone's attention, possibly the most important part in a speech, and the roadmap is meant to give a guideline on what will be discussed.

The judge is, by no means, a friend. They are a parent of one of the scholars you will be competing against when it comes to rankings. When it comes down to presenting, you must convince them to listen to your words. Judges will not hesitate to start scrolling through their feed on the phone if there is no spice to a speech, what the introduction brings.

When you speak, one must assume the audience, including the judge and opposition are not prepared for their presentation at all. With this, it's important to note that jumping straight into a rebuttal or a point will not help entice the judges, but instead bore them. If one does have an introduction, it will provide a greater chance of hooking everybody into a speech as well as preparing them for what you will be saying.

The fishermen of intros: Hooks

It comes to no surprise that the most important part to catching a fish is having a hook on your rod. And while fishing may have little other relevance to debate, this common ground is a shared power both the best fishermen and debaters hold. Hooks. The most (or least) notorious part of a debate that coaches will either repetitively encourage or, in some rare circumstances, discourage. And in the sea of audiences you will be presenting to, you need to catch your audience. Make them hooked. Like fish, they will not just willingly get caught.

Hooks are a mostly neglected part of debate that I've seen from my experience. Some of the top debaters made it onto the debate showcase, and almost none of them regarding a hook at all. Sometimes their tone variety makes up for the lack of a hook, to be fair. However, to the rest of the 99% of debaters who don't have the liberty of sounding astonishing, and even to the 1% who do, grabbing the attention of the audiences is what sparks up an astonishing speech.

There are a few kinds of hook. However, like in fishing, some of them do a lot better than others. Many hooks are used over, and over, and over, and over, and over again. Judges, despite being parents, have heard them many times. Remember that a single judge could be listening to up to 36 speakers(Do note that half of them will probably neglect hooks) in one day, so you want to make an impression and stand out from the masses.

Conclusions...?
While it might sound completely contradictory, the best hooks work like conclusions would most of the time. The point of a conclusion? To sum up everything that someone has said in a speech. While an introduction differs from a conclusion statement because yes, it's in fact in front of the speech, they act similarly. Do keep note that making the introduction more simple and easy to follow should be done because, of course, the judge and audience hasn't listened to your entire speech yet!

In general, when presenting an introduction, ensuring that it covers all bases and points is important, as it gives everyone an idea of what to expect in your speech. It's no use stating that you will discuss bananas and then talk about grapes, nor is it helpful to describe grapes without telling people what you're describing. What does a conclusion do, then? It restates everything the speaker wants the listeners to take away from their speech. Intros and Conclusions have the same format - for the best presentations, at least - yet are for different purposes.

Presentation

What do you believe?
This part starts with a question. What do you believe in? Whether it be a religion, or moral, or anything, what is something you stick to? More importantly, what is something you would believe in, and keep hold of this belief strongly? If someone told you your belief was wrong, would you give it up? These are the same questions in any debate, whether WSC or not. It's about belief, and how you're able to hold them firmly.

Now this phrase comes as given, from the many, many debate coaches you may encounter. The one giant, possibly cliche statement: "Believe what you say!" But there simply isn't a great other way to emphasize how you should speak about a topic. What does this truly mean? It simply asks people, debaters or not, to hold a point they have strongly. Many fall under the pressure of rebuttals, and collapse their points. Yet, this only leads to less of a result. A judge may have found a rebuttal ridiculous, and it may indeed be so, but it doesn't help penalizing your points and sputtering it out when it's your turn to speak.

This idea applies mostly to how someone presents. When encountering many speakers in the program, they'll speak slowly, quietly, the whole shebang. And while this way of speaking would work in a western world classroom where everyone is meant to be inclusive, it simply doesn't hold for a harsh competitive environment! The one trick to entrance yourself to speak more confidently and pronounced is to truly, to your heart, believe what you speak about. You don't have to believe in your speaking ability, just the thought that you are right.

Turtles VS hares

Here's an example of a couple of words. Hel'owy'adoi'n? Yep. Completely incoherent. And what about this sample? Heeeeeeellllllllooooooooooooooooooooooo... Basically incoherent as well. This is where we enter the playing field of speed, whether you're racing against a turtle or a cheetah. Many great, great debaters fall to this because the judges are just, put simply, unable to keep up with the 300 wpm speaking most professional debaters use! And with the other end of the spectrum, come the shy kids who speak so slowly they lose themselves in pace.

So where is the sweet spot? Trick question. It changes all the time! In order to assess the speed - as well as vocabulary - to use while debating, it's best to understand what audience you are speaking to. This is driven into more in the application section, but in general, by assessing the opposing team as well as the judge by how well their English abilities are, you can come to understand how to speak in the right ways. If it's a debate coach, go as fast as you would like. A parent from Thailand? Maybe tone it down a bit. You're not trying to beat the pace of the audience, you're trying to match it.

A funny way to think about this: Pretend to be a cameraman in a running event. You need to run alongside runners at the same speed to get the best shot, not quicker or slower than them! Nobody wants to spectate a blank shot of a scene where the runners are out of frame. And in this example, this metaphor, the speed of the runner is the speed of understanding your audience has.

Tones!

You could speak like you completely believe what you say, speak at the right pace, everything, and still lose giant marks for presentation. Why? It's about tones! Tonality, being the formal word, is essentially the form of speaking someone gives. English is one of a few languages which have varied tones and a very flowy speaking method - unlike Chinese, where they give you all the tones. But with this, it's incredibly crucial to use tones at the right times. They will certainly give off different impressions, and thus, different scores.

There are many youtube videos on tonality - mainly from speaking gurus which will try to lure you into buying a course - but those videos are still worth checking out. Without the essence of time nor format that a video has, however, here are two tonality tips I'd believe are most important.

1. End on a low note: Although this seems contradictory to how the format of a debate actually should seem, this is exactly the form which tonality should follow. It makes a speaker sound much, much more confident and pronounced if they end their sentence on a lower pitch, or tone. If ending on a higher one, this can lead to a perceived nervousness. Ending on higher pitches are fine if during questions and executed right, however keeping to a lower tone at the end of a sentence is generally the best impression of tones you can make to anybody.
2. Adapt your voice to judges: Although how high or low someone's voice is completely depends on their vocal cords, it's a giant tip to attempt and match the tone of voice of whoever's judging you. Judges will tend to think of their voice as one they will recognize and understand best, and may bias your speaking in favour. It's, of course, what they've been accustomed to their whole lives. So although doing this is tricky, if you're able to move your voice in a direction towards the pitch of the judge, they will have a better impression of you.

Application

Speaking format guide

This is pretty straightforward. Before were the days I thought I was good at debate, to the extent of not even using a guide to format what I said. But from learning how to, indeed, debate in a coherent manner, I've realized that format guides are incredibly useful, no matter skill level.

Here's what I would recommend.

[Hook] - About 15 seconds max

[Intro + Roadmap] - About 30 seconds to 1 minute

Good afternoon audience, distinguished judges, and worthy opponents. I'm here today to argue for/against the motion that "Motion". And I believe I speak for my whole team and the benefit of the world when I say that this motion MUST FALL/STAND.

Roadmap: Which speaker are you, and what are you doing?

- What are you talking about?
- What are your teammates talking about?

[Rebuttal] - 1 minute MAX (We've had too many incidents where rebuttal takes the whole time.)

- Address opp's main points
- Show flaws in reasoning and ideas

[Point] - However many you want - From 1-2 minutes each

Now, I would like to discuss my point about...

- Main point here with some descriptions
- Some examples which support my point brief
- Sources here

[Conc. + Outro] - Like 15 seconds

In conclusion... (Insert catchy conclusion here)

How to assess a judge

This is something which almost everyone will overlook. Remember, a judge is the person judging you. They will be giving your score! Overall, it's best to learn who a judge is by their personality and learn how they will judge you. It's incredibly common for judges to simply judge based on presentation, and also possible for them to judge only one's points.

Speak to the judge: Unless you're incredibly late to a debate round, which likely won't happen, there will be a period of time where you can talk to judges in the Scholar's Cup. It's best not to immediately ask how they judge, as that will give them an odd impression at first. Instead, it's best to ask judges if their children are participating in the Scholar's Cup, as it is much more likely than not so. It shows your interest in their participation, and leading a conversation from there can help see what a judge is like. What to watch out for?

1. Is the judge strict or not? This can help determine how to act during debate. Of course, it's always important to be respectful. However, if you see them as less strict, using cheery and varied words in a debate may help convince them more. It also first indicates if you should keep talking to them.
2. How does the judge speak? This is a clear indication of how a judge would like people to pace their speech. Figuring out a good pace to follow for judges includes asking questions regarding where they are from, and if appropriate, what their child is doing here, and why they wanted to join WSC.
3. What is the judge's vocabulary? Again, this relates to the point above. It can be assessed through speaking with the judge about what their profession is, and where they live/lived. With distinctions, one can deduce what words are right to use during debate.
    a. Sometimes it is the opposite of what one would expect, with a person with a high vocabulary who likes to listen to people talk slowly and clearly.
4. What does the judge grade? Be careful with this one, as not many judges will even tell you this, rather giving you strange looks. However, if you're able to

justify the reason you would want their judging style - working best with the less strict ones - they will tell you what they want from you as a speaker. Generally, they like presentations the most.

There's a fair bit more one can do to condition to a judge's needs perfectly, for example discussing troubles you may have during a debate. Whether this be anxiety or a flu, it's always best to inform a judge about this. Not because you want to have a victim mentality, but to give the judge an idea of what to expect.

Theory VS Practice

There are many things which would happen in theory which, in practicality, do not. It's incredibly important to know as a debater in the World Scholar's Cup that what you may expect in debate will be quite different from what you receive. This is especially a message to professional, national debaters who've been accustomed to debate competitions. The World Scholar Cup is not a debate competition, and it shouldn't be treated as such.

One giant point is again, the scoring system. Standardization is important to judge everyone fairly. However, with parent judges and the World Scholar's Cup system, it's impossible to make the competition completely fair. With this in mind, there are ways to fit to the needs of this system, and adapt how you act to the different judges. Rather than focusing equally on topics worth both more and less to a judge, putting more effort into the places the judges will score more is important in this instance.

Many debaters hate the style of WSC debate, simply because in practice, the system works very differently from how they would expect. However, this program helps people practice practical speaking - at least in my perspective. The reason for this is simply because the Scholar's Cup gives an audience of debaters and judges who come from different backgrounds, and have different needs. This allows for the best performing debaters not to be those who'd trained the same system multiple times, but those who can truly speak to a variety of people adaptively.

There's more to discuss in this area, but it's best for everyone to discover most of the practicality themselves. Writing doesn't simply suffice for many experiences, mostly discovered in the Second Year of doing WSC.

Those who Showcase

How do people get on the Debate Showcase? Not by having good, coherent arguments - Not by having good use of words and structure - but by sounding very good. Most Debate Showcases have scholars who sound very enthusiastic and convincing, but do not have the best of points, reasoning, nor even organization. In this guide, all you need is the area about presentation to get onto the showcase, albeit you need a lot of it, and very well.

If you do get onto a showcase, expect it to be incredibly pressured, and expect your debate level to drop about three notches. With thousands watching, it's far more nerve wracking than the regular debate rounds everyone faces, although those are the ones worth points. Imagine if it were the other way around! The showcase is about not the scholars who got the best marks, but those who spoke the most confidently and strongly.

Of course, the Showcase will showcase those who'd scored well in the actual debate area, but it's not a single confirmer of how well someone actually did. Just by getting onto the showcase, doesn't mean a guarantee of amazing results. It's because of how judges select people for the showcase, through a small bubble for the best of the best of speakers. One may have the worst content and strategy in the world, yet would be selected for the showcase because the judge thought their speaking would impress the audience.

Final Words

There is so, so much more to debate - specifically in the World Scholar's Cup - than there are words to describe them. It's such an interesting and unique experience which allows people to learn to adapt to speaking. It's more about experiencing how to speak with others in the real world. It's less about debate, giving the WSC a very misleading name for that event. A fiscal version of what people would name debate as.

But again, debate is only worth 35% of one's marks in the Scholar's Cup, or about 25% of the marks for a team. It's not worth perfecting every cornerstone of it when knowing the other 65% of marks - or 75% for a team - is not based on debate. Getting a score good enough is, of course, good enough. It's not too much about being a perfect speaker with perfect adaptability, more so doing better than last time. Remember, the scale of grading is from 2-7, with 7 being exceptional. Exceptional doesn't need to be perfect.

That's about it. There's a lot more about this type of debate, but this guide will help bring a debater in WSC (And maybe, perhaps elsewhere) to a place better than before in their speaking abilities.

Thanks for reading!

Debate Prompts Here: Writing/Debate Prompts for WSC 2023: