

Harangue

The Debaters Association of Victoria's Magazine for Students

In this issue...

Definitions: getting them right

Preparing a case: step-by-step instructions

Win fame and fortune: the quiz

Chairing a debate: the definitive guide

... and much more!

Didn't Win Tonight?

Don't worry – there are over 1,300 teams in the Schools Competition. This means at least 650 other teams are in the same position. Remember to listen closely to the adjudicator – this feedback is extremely valuable, since it is tailored to your team and their performance in the debate. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to approach the adjudicator after the debate.

All adjudicators are happy to clarify their comments, give you more personal feedback, and answer any questions that you have. There's nothing adjudicators love more than answering the questions of interested debaters, so don't be shy! On page two of this issue, you'll find information about the DAV's online resources which can help you better understand the technical side of debating.

Hint: When preparing for a debate, remember that there are other teams from your school also preparing for the same topic. You can pool your resources, give feedback to each other, and (if you have teams drawn on opposite sides of the debate) even have practice debates. Although the case your team presents should be your own, listening to the perspectives of others can give you new insight into a topic.

(Note: this is **not** allowed during preparation time for secret- or advised-topic debates.)

Dear students,

Welcome to the Schools Competition for 2008. This year, the DAV is reviving *Harangue*, a publication for student debaters which hasn't been seen since the last century. This year, there will be five editions of *Harangue* – one for each round.

You will only receive this first issue of *Harangue* in printed form; the next four issues will be available during each round from the DAV website: <http://www.dav.com.au>. In future issues of *Harangue*, you'll find reviews of previous topics, tips to help you debate better, chances to win with the quiz, and much more.

I hope you enjoy debating in the schools competition this year. Remember to enjoy the experience, and good luck!

Michael Ciesielski
Publications editor

**Visit the DAV's new website:
<http://www.dav.com.au>**

You'll find:

- Future issues of *Harangue*
- Team ladders for each region
- The draw for each round
- The Resource Guide which will help you prepare for each topic
- Training articles
- and much, much more!

Definitions

By Ray D’Cruz, Past President

Stating the issue

The purpose of the definition is to state the issue that is to be resolved by the two teams throughout the debate. This may be as simple as saying “The issue in this debate is...”

Clarifying terms

It will also include clarification of any terms which may be unclear, for example, on the topic “That Kevin Rudd is an Australian hero,” the interpretation a team places on the term “hero” will be crucial in the debate. The word hero can mean anything. It can range from a flawed hero like Galileo (from the play *Galileo*), a man who had many faults and many strengths, to a flawless character like Superman.

Challenging the definition

Definitions may be challenged by the negative team, but this is not recommended unless there are serious problems with the affirmative team’s definition. In the event of a definitional challenge, the more reasonable definition will win.

Teams should be prepared to show that their definition is reasonable by justifying it or placing it in context. On the topic “That

we spend too much money on the stars,” a team could reasonably define the debate to be about excessive expenditure in the space race, astrology, or Hollywood figures. All of these definitions may be quite reasonable to the person on the street, so it will come down to which team justifies their definition best.

The “even-if”

In a definitional debate (with one exception), both teams should then go on to present “even-if” arguments. This is where the speaker says “even if we accept the definition of our opponents, their arguments are still wrong because...” This allows both teams to debate each other’s substantive arguments and avoids a debate where each team speaks in parallel to the other. This way, you still get a debate - albeit a messy one.

Truisms (the one exception)

The one exception noted above is the truism. This is a definition that does not allow the other team to debate the topic. For instance, on the topic “That we should eat, drink, and be merry”, it would be a truism for the affirmative team to say that the debate was about whether we should eat food and drink water to survive, and whether it is better to be happy

than sad. The negative then has no argument - they can’t exactly say “No, we don’t think that you need to eat or drink to survive, and we think being sad is better than being happy.” It is a truism if the other side simply has no reasonable argument. So when you are preparing your definition, make sure there is an affirmative and a negative case.

The reason that this is an exception to the “even-if” argument is that with a truistic definition, there is simply no rebuttal possible.

The two cornerstones of matter are logic and relevance. A team which runs a truism is neither logical nor relevant. It will not be logical because rather than reasoning through to their conclusion from their contentions, they are jumping to their conclusion by virtue of their definition. It will also be irrelevant because they will not be resolving one of the issues that could have been debated.

In debating, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is — in this case, you can’t define the negative team out of the debate before they’ve even stood up to speak!

After School

Once they get to University, many student debaters go on to debate at intervarsity tournaments. Contingents from Melbourne and Monash Universities, both full of adult DAV members, recently went to the World Universities Debating Championships in Thailand. The high quality of debates at this competition means it is particularly impressive (although not surprising) that two DAV members from Monash, Tim Jeffrie and Fiona Prowse, made it all the way to the Grand Final.

Online Resources

The DAV website (<http://www.dav.com.au>) contains many helpful resources for debaters. As well as the Resource Guide, a topic-specific jump-start for your research, there are many articles about the mechanics of debating. You can also download the full text of the Australia-Asia Debating Guide, which clearly describes the criteria for good debating that adjudicators will follow. (You can also purchase bound copies of the Guide from the DAV office.)

How to Prepare a Case

By Catherine Dunlop

1. Brainstorm: every member of the team writes down all the ideas, arguments, and information that they know about the topic.

2. Discuss: you should discuss the issues and throw around ideas using the notes from the brainstorming. Debates should be able to criticise other ideas freely and should ask for clarification. This is the time for all members of the team to get an understanding of the topic and the general approach that the team will take. You should end up with a list of possible arguments.

3. Define: the team should decided on their approach to the topic. What will you be arguing about? In what context - Australia, overseas, generally, or a specific case? The exact definition does not need to be worked out, but everyone should agree on what the debate will be about. You should make sure that everyone on the team can defend the definition if attacked.

4. Refine: the team should work out which arguments they want to use. You should work out examples to prove them, ensure that none of the arguments contradict each other, and discuss the anticipated rebuttal. There should be a good list of arguments, maybe in order from strongest argument to weakest.

5. Split: you should work out how you will divide the arguments between speakers. The first and second speakers may want to divide up the main arguments according to which they prefer, and then try to group the other arguments around them in themes.

6. Restate the definition: the whole team should then work out the exact wording of the definition. Each speaker must understand and agree with the definition.

7. Decide on a team line: a team line is a statement that encapsulates the team's approach to the topic, and what the team wants to prove. It does not need to be long, and does not need to be repeated by each speaker. It should be used by each team member to check that all your arguments go to proving the team line. It is useful to make sure that all your arguments are consistent.

8. Write your speeches: with all of the above done, you are now in an excellent position to write your speech and flesh out your arguments before the debate.

Win with the *Harangue* Quiz!

Send your answers to these ten questions to the DAV office by the end of round 1. The best and/or most correct entry will win two movie tickets!

Send your answers to debater@netspace.net.au by April 16th.

1. Why are some people opposed to plans to pump water from the Goulburn Valley to Melbourne?

2. Multiply together all the numbers involved in Kevin Rudd's "Australia 2020" summits.

3. Who are the Democratic contenders for this year's 2008 Presidential Election?

4. List the stakeholders in the controversy over channel-deepening in Port Phillip Bay.

5. In a debate between a team of Pokemon and a team of characters from SpongeBob SquarePants, who would win? Why?

6. Who is the President of France, and for what romance-related reasons has he been in the news recently?

7. Construct a short story about confusion using only the titles of songs recorded after 1990.

8. Thinking about stakeholders, which group is most affected by the national citizenship test?

9. Which type of transport was briefly banned from Melbourne trains at the start of this year?

10. Who is the Prime Minister of Russia, and who is the Leader of the Opposition?

Have Your Say

If you have something to say about debating, and want to write an article for *Harangue*, or just want to request that something be covered in a future issue, contact the DAV office by email:

debater@netspace.net.au

State Team

The Victorian team were very successful last year at the National Schools Debating Championship. The team, James Wilson, Kellymaree Butler, Chris Bisset and Minh-Quan Nguyen, were coached by former Schools Administrators Liz Sheargold and Tim Jeffrie, and won the grand final (“That the UN has failed”) against Western Australia in a unanimous decision.

Trials for the 2008 team took place on the 17th of February. They are being coached by Tim Jeffrie and Amit Golder, and we wish them the best of luck for this year’s National competition in Sydney.

Development Squad

The Development Squad provides an opportunity for talented debaters to receive high-quality coaching and training that they might not otherwise have access to. In 2007, the Development Squad was highly successful, and it will run again in 2008.

Selections for the Development Squad are made on the basis of adjudicators’ recommendations. Last year the schools involved stretched from Dromana to Bendigo. The youngest student was in Year 8, while the oldest was in Year 12.

The 2008 Development Squad will commence later in the year. For more information, contact the DAV office.

In the Next Issue of *Harangue*

- Where do my topics come from?
- Meet a *real* adjudicator
- Another quiz with fabulous prize
- Review of debates from round 1
- Training materials to give you the edge
- and much, much more!

Remember, the next issue of *Harangue* will not be printed for you — you’ll need to download it yourself from the DAV website: <http://www.dav.com.au>

Chairing a Debate

Although the role of the chairperson may seem small, a competent chairperson can make a debate proceed smoothly, which is pleasant for everyone. Here are some things to remember:

1. State the topic: this might seem obvious, but the audience may not have heard it before. It’s also a good idea in case one team has a different wording to the other.

2. Introduce the teams.

3. Announce the speaking times: although everyone should know their speaking times, announcing them at the start of the debate means that all speakers are aware of them, and protects you from accusations of bias.

4. Call on each speaker: introduce each speaker only when the adjudicator indicates to you that they’re ready.

5. Timing: please keep time carefully. To signal the time, you should knock on the desk, clap your hands, or ring a bell — whichever sound you choose, just make sure it is loud enough to be heard by all.

Grade	Warning knock	Final knock
A and B	6 minutes	8 minutes
C	5 minutes	6 minutes
D	4 minutes	5 minutes

6. At the end of each speech: announce the length of the speech, then wait for the adjudicator to signal that they’re ready for the next speaker.

7. At the end of the last speech: inform the audience that the adjudicator is deliberating, and will deliver their adjudication in a few minutes.

Thanks for chairing — it really makes the debate run smoothly.

Acknowledgements

Harangue thanks: Catherine Dunlop, Ray D’Cruz, Nick Boyd-Caine, Laura Bellamy, Charisma Dungan, and the DAV Executive.

Harangue is published by the **Debaters Association of Victoria**

6/87-89 Flemington Road, North Melbourne

t: 9348 9477 f: 9348 9466 e: debater@netspace.net.au