

Easy Entry

to the World of Speech and Debate

Easy Entry guides you through the complicated yet rewarding journey of speech and debate competition.

Chris Jeub

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Copyright Policy

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Introduction



Welcome to the speech and debate community!

(Selfie taken at a Stoa coaches conference.)

I'm uber glad you picked up *Easy Entry*. This book was created afresh to tackle the age-old question: *How do I get involved in the world of speech and debate?* And, for those of you already into it, *How do I start winning?*

My *Not-so-Easy* Entry (30 Years Ago)

I jumped into the world of forensics competition in 1993 when I took my first teaching job. I was young and perhaps a little naive, happily taking on the extracurricular “debate coach” position that apparently no one else in the school wanted. I took it on with gusto, and I immediately recognized the benefits of the activity. Wow, was I impressed, as you likely have been, too, if you’ve seen young people in competition. I remember sitting in awe watching kids as young as twelve stand up and confidently communicate their position on highly detailed political and value propositions. They were sights to see!

My problem then is a problem I still see among teachers, coaches, parents, and (especially!) students entering the speech and debate world: *I knew nothing!* There was so much to learn. Leagues to join, competitive events to enter, rules that seemed to change constantly, all new vocabulary, conflicting coaching philosophies, what tournament attire to wear, registration deadlines with late penalties and email announcements...gah!

I was drowning in information, just as you probably are right now. This book shows you the way into the complicated-but-awesome world of speech and debate — minus the headache of years of trial-and-error that I put myself through. I’m not complaining, I enjoyed every minute of it, but what I know now would have helped tremendously.

All I wanted back then was to be a decent coach, to not let my students down. So I challenged myself to master the chaos. I recall taking my hard-earned vacations to “cuddle up” with several inch-thick textbooks (there are plenty!) and devour them. I traveled the country to countless tournaments, always the first in line to snag up ballots, and got to know some of the world’s most renowned coaches. I was an English teacher who became an avid student of speech and debate.

Since my first year of coaching I have coached countless numbers of students, several national contenders and champions, some of whom were my own children. I’ve collected quite the trophy case of awards from all over the country (I’ll share it with you later). I’ve run the largest tournaments, started several speech and debate clubs in schools and homeschool co-ops, published best-selling texts on numerous competitive events, and served on the boards of established leagues — even helped start organizations that promote speech and debate competition.

That's me. I love speech and debate and want the whole world involved, especially *you*. Now let's talk about *you* and how this book will help you get involved AND SUCCEED in the world of speech and debate.

***Easy Entry* is written for students, parents, coaches, teachers or administrators to establish a foundation for speech and debate competition.** The information can get rather complicated, but *Easy Entry* will keep it simple and to-the-point. "Cut the fluff," I like to say. *Easy Entry* will be your guide to speech and debate success.

You'll be competing at your first tournament before you know it, and with this book, you'll do great and perhaps come home with an award.

Why So Much Excitement for Speech and Debate?

I'm in the center of the speech and debate world, and this book is my attempt to bring you into it with me. I'm paving a clear path for you, but perhaps you are asking whether you *should* go down this path. You may be wondering, "Why does Jeub get so pumped over speech and debate?" Let me get personal with you as I explain why I do.

I have a large family, half of my children now adults. I am humbled when I stop and reflect at the incredible blessing speech has been for my family. *All* of my adult children are *exceptional* speakers. Others have tended to write this off as inherently a Jeub trait or something, but I don't believe it. Some of my children have learning disabilities. One of my children, in fact, has extreme dyslexia and was not able to read till he was 15. Guess what he did? He wrote an oratory about it and qualified the speech to Nationals. He didn't debate because of his disability, but he won three titles in literary interpretation.

Speech and debate are the best extracurricular activities in which you can participate.

That's right. The *best*. I used to think the written word was the best – still very important, which is why I got an English teaching degree decades ago. As I mentioned earlier, my first teaching job threw me into speech and debate. I found that these extracurricular events had it all! Critical thinking, public speaking, persuasion, rhetoric — the list of skills mastered by the speech and debate student was long. Those years of coaching in the upper Midwest taught me how to teach

speech and debate activities, and the following decades launched me into publishing curriculum. I've literally made speech and debate my life. Why? Because...

Students who master speech and debate will master life and become the leaders our world needs.

Speech and debate changed my entire pedagogical outlook. And you know what? I believe it should change yours, too. Whether you're a student, teacher, parent or administrator, I want you to consider:

- Students: Chase after the first-place prizes during your competitive years.
- Teachers: Award your best students and volunteer at every tournament.
- Parents: Be your kid's #1 fan and #1 coach and #1 teacher.
- Administrators: Make sure academic speech is valued just as high (if not, higher!) than other sports.

None of the above? You can participate as a judge at tournaments, volunteer to help, and ask clubs to be a part of the training. Young people are eager to perform speeches for people who believe in them. That could be you!

Seven Myths Worth Busting

I believe — without any reservation at all — that speech and debate is the best activity for *every* young person. Perhaps you're not quite there yet, and that's okay. There are countless educational ventures tugging at the time of young people growing through their adolescence. Speech and debate activities are among many.

However, I have heard plenty of excuses from competitors, educators, administrators, and parents of the myriad reasons *not* to get involved in speech and debate. These reasons are unfortunately used to avoid activities that could greatly benefit young people and their schools. I have answers (and nearly 30 years of examples) for these excuses. Here are some of the most common.

1. I have a speech impediment.

I have coached kids with lisps, stutters, clefts, and all sorts of speech disorders, many of them to championship level. One of my daughters had a hefty overbite before getting braces, and she had trouble speaking through the trial. She did very well in competition. In fact, parents who place their children in competitive speech events find that their children overcome their impediments, often better than therapy — *expensive* therapy! It makes perfect sense that it does. Those kids with speech impediments will grow with leaps and bounds when involved in speech and debate.

2. I'm shy / introverted.

Truth be known, I believe the best speakers and debaters are introverts. They get into research and analysis. “Shy” is a negative connotation to healthy retrospection and usually deep thinking. Quiet people actually appreciate the structured speech and debate atmosphere, and they often overcome any dysfunctional “shyness” as they prepare to speak. Shy or introverted kids typically excel in speech and debate.

3. I'm too cool.

My heavens, this was my excuse growing up. I regret thinking I was “too cool” to participate because I would have truly enjoyed the community of speakers and debaters as an adolescent. Think about it. Club meetings are places where young people lift up and encourage one another to engage in what most people believe to be the scariest activity in life: *public speaking*. Naturally, the friendships that form are the strongest of bonds. Perhaps looking in from the outside does make us look a little “uncool,” but we’re having the time of our lives. To me, that’s pretty darn *cool*.

4. I'm more into sports.

And what do you suppose speech and debate is? It's a competition of the mind, the best sort of sport. Besides, the two usually aren't exclusive of one another. I've had football players, wrestlers, golfers, boxers, and many other athletes on my team. Late-winter and spring sports often get in the way of competitions, but they are usually manageable to the committed speaker and debater. Sports and forensics are mutually supportive.

5. I don't like to argue.

Perhaps debate isn't for you, but literary interps and oratories are wonderful opportunities. I'll get to that soon, but let it be known here: *there is something for everyone in speech and debate*. But I wonder if you know what a true "argument" is? It isn't a shouting match or people screaming at each other. It is sound, reasonable discussion that leads to a resolution. Who wouldn't want that? If anything, speech and debate helps make you the "smart" person in any conflict, giving you the skills necessary to communicate and influence others. "Argumentation" is a necessary development of proper thinking that everyone should master.

6. Speech and debate is hard.

Yes, it is, just as any new activity is. I've got plenty of pointers in making it EASY (that's the name of this book, isn't it?), but step back a second and ask yourself, "Is there anything worth doing that is *easy*?" Admit it: The best things in life take some hard-to-earn effort. Just wait till you win your first trophy, you'll see. When you walk across the stage being applauded for your hard work and dedication, you'll fall in love with speech and debate. And that will make you work even harder!

Like I said, speech and debate has something for every young person. The myths some people cling to are just plain wrong. The last myth should blow them all away and pave the path to successful speech and debate competition:

7. I don't know how to do speech and debate.

This excuse is forever behind you. You've got this book! *Easy Entry* lays out the path to successful participation in speech and debate. Let's now venture into the details you need to know to easily enter the wonderful world of speech and debate. The rest of the book will essentially show you exactly how to "do it," and you'll learn how to do it well.

Let's get started!

Schools



How you identify as a student is important when entering speech and debate.

(Photo taken at one of my debate camps in Oklahoma.)

First thing's first. You need to correctly identify what kind of school you attend. This goes for students, coaches, teachers, administrators and parents. Later on you will make decisions about leagues, events, and tournament opportunities, and these decisions hinge directly on the four different kinds of schooling that we have nowadays in the world of education. You've likely already made this choice, but it helps to know all that is available when you make strategic choices later.

Public

The way competition is set up within public schools is through extracurricular teams, much like any "team" activity or sport that a school may have. Sometimes these clubs are supplemented

with classes with curriculum and teachers to teach them, but most of the time these are after-school clubs administered by a coach. They meet regularly (e.g. weekly) to prepare for tournaments. These tournaments are hosted by schools in the area, and the coaches have organizations that keep rules and regulations for their tournaments. They typically will have qualification standards for advancing to larger tournaments outside their grassroots organizations.

Organizational structure of local groups vary greatly. Venture to inquire of what coaches in your school does with speech and debate. There often is a community of coaches from a handful of schools who gather to set rules and standards for their tournaments. If there isn't a coach or a program in your school, ask area schools. There likely is a program going on nearby, perhaps a robust one with friendly teachers ready to welcome a new school into their program.

Depending on the budget of the school, students may be able to travel "the circuit." These are tournaments hosted by large universities in various parts of the country (i.e. Harvard, Yale). They are typically "open" tournaments and sometimes have scholarships or monetary awards.

Ultimately, public education students should have a club to sign up for, just like any club offered in the school.

Charter

Charter schools are formed by interested parties (i.e. parents, teachers, community members) who contract within a school district, essentially forming a "charter" in the local community. I work at a charter school as an English teacher, and I run an afterschool speech and debate club at the school. We compete with other schools in our town and greater county. We also have opportunities to travel to other counties and compete on a state level.

Charter schools are technically public schools in that they are allocated certain state funds measured by the number of students they have enrolled. However, they operate with more autonomy than a public school run strictly by their local boards. Sometimes schools write into their charter higher academic standards than the state — like my school does — which makes speech and debate a perfect addition to the school.

While my school does not have speech and debate as part of their charter, it is written into the school's curricula and used as a strong selling point for parents when they apply. There are several charter schools competing in all sorts of tournaments, sometimes even in the homeschool world (depending on the league, which I'll explain later). Clubs in charter schools resemble other schools: students sign up and coaching for upcoming tournaments begin.

Private

With private education, it's "all of the above" with the exception of government funds. They play in the same leagues as public and charter schools play, and many of them have done quite well in competition. Some of the most notorious schools in the country have been private Catholic schools. Though I didn't compete in grammar school, I was raised through the 8th grade in a Catholic school in Wisconsin. There is something about Catholics and debate, one supposes. They tend to be exceptional debaters.

Fellow speech and debate coaches like me seem to enjoy complaining about the lack of funds dedicated to speech and debate, but private schools have shown that it can work. When a school keeps to its core values of academic excellence, it makes sense to allocate resources to speech and debate. Private schools have strong history showing that it can work.

Home

Speech and debate is considered the "homeschool sport," and I've been thoroughly involved in training home educators in this sport since the first league started in 1996. My wife and I are currently part-time home educators who participate in two homeschool forensic leagues. I tell you, this is an awesome community of people.

I was a public school teacher when my wife and I started home educating in the 1990's, back when the educational choice of homeschooling was a bit taboo. Most people questioned the validity of educating at home – in truth, we had initial doubts ourselves – but that question is gone today. Home education has become a very common educational choice, and a most successful one.

But home education is as diverse as the families who choose its path. Today, it is often difficult to tell who home schools and who doesn't. Many educational choices within public schools offer at-home supplements, and some at-home curricula are sanctioned and even encouraged by public schools. This past decade, laws favoring charter schools have become hugely popular, and these charter schools have adopted more flexible, parent-centered educational approaches that have, in turn, been academically successful.

Home educators are typically academically focused, so it is no wonder that speech and debate has become "the homeschool sport." I'll explain later the various leagues available to families, but it is safe to say that most anywhere in the United States home educated students are able to participate in speech and debate.

Leagues



I wish there was one league, one set of rules, one path to choose from — that would make things much easier, wouldn't it? But the interests and talents of the speech and debate community are vast and varied. I will bring simplicity to the complicated world of speech and debate by giving a short synopsis of the major leagues available to students, plus a bulleted list of the main features the leagues offer.

NSDA

I made my debut into speech and debate in public education — as did most American students and educators at the time — in the early 90s. The community had been named the NFL (National Forensic League), but confusion over what “forensic” means and the obvious branding conflict with the National Football League caused the league to adopt its new name: The National Speech and Debate Association. This has been its official name since 2014.

- NSDA is run by an Executive Director and an office of staff stationed in Iowa.
- NSDA is governed by a Board of Directors.
- NSDA has approximately 4000 members schools and over 100,000 student members.
- NSDA has a point-based membership system and grants school, coaches, and student memberships.
- NSDA competitors may compete in as many events as their schedule allows, but most schools encourage focusing on one event for each student. Public, charter, and private schools typically allow one or two events for speakers and debaters, and Nationals only allows one entry per student.

- NSDA competitors are managed between Middle School students and High School students.
- NSDA allows homeschoolers to participate through local school districts. In other words, if a homeschooler arranges with a local school to participate on their team, NSDA accepts eligibility.
- NSDA competitors see their results through a national database called “Tabroom.” Tournament directors upload results and students are able to monitor their position for advancement to state and regional tournaments. NSDA uses Tabroom to invite high school competitors to the National Tournament.
- NSDA Nationals is announced approximately three years in advance and is listed on its website. Nationals consists of approximately 4500 students from more than 1200 schools. The Middle School National Tournament is an open tournament that draws roughly 850 middle schoolers every year, and it runs alongside the High School National Tournament.
- You may find out more on NSDA at its website: <https://speechanddebate.org>.

NCFCA

This is the first homeschool debate league, and I was an enthusiastic leader in the first years of the league in 1996, coaching debate in our public school while my wife and I were homeschooling our daughters. The league was the brainchild of the Home School Legal Defense Association, a powerful legal firm that has helped defend homeschool freedoms for decades. The league eventually out-grew itself and became the National Christian Forensics and Communications Association (NCFCA) in 2000. Today it remains the largest homeschool speech and debate league in the nation, but has recently broadened its audience to more than just homeschoolers.

- NCFCA is run by an Executive Director and an online staff.
- NCFCA is governed by a Board of Directors.
- NCFCA considers its participants “affiliates” to the league and has approximately 4000 affiliate families.
- NCFCA started as a strictly homeschooled league, but added a waiver of allowance in 2014. That waiver was removed altogether in 2019, allowing any educational model to join the league and compete.

- NCFCA has both a Statement of Faith and a Code of Behavior that all affiliates must abide to at all NCFCA competitions.
- NCFCA competitors must be no younger than 12 years old and no older than 18 years old on September 1st of the competition season. One event (Moot Court) has the minimum age set to 15. High school graduates, no matter the age, are not allowed to compete.
- The NCFCA is centrally structured and is separated into 12 geographical regions.
- NCFCA competitors may compete in one debate event and up to five speech events, along with the possibility of competing in the unique event of Moot Court.
- The NCFCA runs a hierarchy of tournaments with the National Tournament at the top, underscored by regional and state qualifiers. They also run open tournaments and smaller tournaments they call “National Mixers.”
- NCFCA affiliates qualify for nationals “slots” and the league awards some “at-large” slots to gain an invitation to nationals. Approximately 450 students compete at the NCFCA National Tournament.
- NCFCA announces its national tournament at each year’s previous national tournament.
- You may find out more on NCFCA at its website: <https://ncfca.org>.

Stoa

Stoa is not an acronym. A “stoa” is a classical architectural structure for a porch or public area outside the main structures of an arena. These were gathering places for debates and public speeches in Greece and Rome. The Stoa speech and debate league started in 2009 and has largely mirrored NCFCA in their rules, though their governance has been different. I served on Stoa’s first official Board of Directors in 2010, and my residence has many opportunities through Stoa. In some parts of the country, homeschoolers have found opportunities in both Stoa and NCFCA concurrently.

- Stoa is run by the governing Board of Directors and an Executive Director.
- Stoa considers its participants “members” of the league, and the league has approximately 2000 member families.
- Stoa has a Statement of Faith that parents of member families must agree.
- Stoa competitors must be between 12 and 18 years old on October 1st of the competition season.

- Stoa competitors must be deemed “homeschooled” by the parents and the state. No student enrolled full-time in a public charter school or public school independent study program is allowed.
- Stoa has various committees and subcommittees that put forth changes to rules for the membership to consider.
- Stoa members run their tournaments, with the league running only one tournament per year, its national tournament.
- Stoa competitors may compete in one debate event, as many speech events as they choose, and a unique debate event called “parliamentary debate.”
- Stoa competitors see their results through a national database called “Speech Ranks.” Students who are homeschooled may add their ranking from tournaments of “private Christian homeschool speech and debate organizations/leagues.”
- Stoa hosts the National Invitational Tournament of Champions (NITOC) every year and typically announces its hosting place at the NITOC before. Students registered on SpeechRanks.com who gain two checkmarks in any event will receive an invitation to compete in that event at NITOC.
- You may find out more on Stoa at its website: <https://stoausa.org>.

Other Leagues and Organizations

The three leagues above are the largest national leagues from which I have experience. But there are other, lesser-known leagues that may be a better fit for you. Here are some with hyperlinks for more information:

- High School Debate Program (HSDP). This is a California-based parliamentary debate program that hosts parliamentary debate tournaments. <https://highschooldebate.org>
- Logos Forensics Association (LFA). The Logos Forensics Association is an alternative to the NSDA for private school students. <https://www.logosforensics.org>
- National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL). This is an association that advances debate education in urban public schools. <https://urbandebate.org>
- National Catholic Forensics League (NCFL). This is a unique league run by Catholics with tournaments hosted by Catholics. <http://www.ncfl.org>

- National High School Mock Trial. Students compete in a simulated courtroom trial in which they learn about the legal system. <https://nationalmocktrial.org>
- World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC). This is an international organization that hosts parliamentary debates around the world. <https://wsdcdebate.org>

If none of these leagues have active schools or clubs in your area that fit your educational model, don't give up. It is worth noting that there are countless numbers of local leagues that do not aspire to a national network or tournament. I belong to a league of thirteen schools in the Colorado Springs area specifically tailored to middle school students, but these students don't qualify to a higher regional or national tournament. That's okay, and such a league may be okay for you, too.

Ask around locally and do some research. I bet you'll find an active speech and debate community suitable for your unique educational model and who would gladly welcome you. It may be easier to get involved than you think, and you'll soon be thriving from the benefits.

Speech



There are all sorts of speech events to choose from, something for everyone.

(My son won two titles in two different leagues in the same event, a record yet to be broken.)

A speech “event” is the type of speech at a competition. There are so many different events across leagues that it is difficult to keep track of the opportunities that you have. That’s what this book is for, to bring order to the confusion and make it “easy” to figure out what event is best for you. By the end of this chapter, you should have a strong understanding of the various speech events available for tournament season.

Easy Explanation of Competitive Speech

Tournaments invite students to compete in selected speech events, sometimes called “Individual Events.” In their schools and homes, students prepare to compete in one or more events. There are dozens of events varying from league to league, so I group all events into three categories: limited-prep, platform and interp. All speeches at a tournament are judged and students are ranked and given points for their work.

Categories of Speech Events

Tournaments offer a number of events, and they can appear unorganized when you first see them. Furthermore, leagues and organizations often change things up from year to year. *Easy Entry* does its best to organize the events to help you quickly assess an event by understanding the structure of three specific categories. Let’s explore the three categories of competitive speech.

Limited-Prep

Limited-prep events are impromptu speeches that are given from a “prompt” (a Latin root meaning “to bring forth”). Competitors receive these prompts at the tournament.

The name “limited-prep” does not mean “no prep.” There is a fair amount of preparation required as students get ready for a limited-prep event. The point of a “limited-prep” is that the speeches are not memorized ahead of the tournament. Instead, speakers are given a prompt during their round and are allowed a certain amount of time to prepare their speech. Impromptu and Extemporaneous are examples of “limited-prep” speaking events.

All students are given the equivalent topics for their speaking time. For example, students in an extemp round may be given questions on current economic issues in the news. The point is for the judges to rate the students fairly in how they present the material. Here is a summary of the criteria judges use in ranking a limited-prep event:

1. **Content.** Sure, students are given the topic or question, but how they stick to the topic is just as important. Basic development of thesis, examples and illustrations reflect on how mature a rhetorical speaker they are.

2. **Organization.** Basic understanding of the structure of a speech (introduction, body, conclusion) is ranked by the judge.
3. **Rhetoric.** How succinct are the words of the speech? Does the speech have a fair balance of ethos, pathos and logos?
4. **Delivery.** How good of a speaker is the student? Impromptu ballots will ask judges to be attentive to such things as apparent energy, vocal clarity, and eye contact.
5. **Overall Impression.** All the limited-prep ballots ask for the judge's bottom line impression of the speaker's speech.

Each league has their own layout for limited-preparation events, but the idea is the same: *train students to be great impromptu speakers*. These events vary from league to league, and you will want to study the literature your league provides for the various limited-prep events they offer. For now, realize that limited-preparation is an awesome event for impromptu speakers who want to hone their impromptu skills.

Platform

Platform events are oratory speeches written by the students and prepared (usually memorized) for presentation at tournaments.

Young people naturally desire to express themselves, and a major focus of education should include the opportunity for self-expression within clearly defined guidelines. When a student writes an original speech and delivers it, he or she is taking a *platform*, hence the name of this type of event. There are several platform categories. Each league has its unique rules and guidelines for proper platform speaking.

Judges rank students on the same criterion as a limited-prep speaker: content, organization, rhetoric, delivery and overall impression. A typical platform speech will have many of the same characteristics as a limited-prep speech, but all platforms are prepared speeches ahead of the tournament. In other words, students will write and practice their speech ahead of time. Some of the events may allow some sort of script to be used — and they may even require a script — but for the most part, platforms are expected to be memorized and delivered at the tournament. Platform speeches are usually 10 minutes long and students are ranked among a room full of other platform speakers.

Interp

Interpretive (or “interp”) events are literary pieces cut into a specific timeframe to give a cohesive presentation of the literature.

Students naturally fall in love with stories (fiction, biographies, plays) and will desire to share those stories with others. They have the opportunity to do so with *interp*. And while they’re at it, students will develop their own understanding of literature and, more significantly, develop skills to communicate the worth of the literature they choose to interpret.

There are several types of interpretative speeches, and all the leagues have created their unique presentation formats. Students are tasked with creating scripts or manuscripts from published literature (the only exception being Open or Original Interp where students can use original or unpublished works of literature). Students are not allowed to use one script for more than one year, and a script can only be entered in one event per tournament. Scripts have original word limitations and editing standards, and students need to keep a close eye on the event rules to make sure they are within the guidelines.

Here are some more specifics on interps:

- Students are usually required to submit their scripts to the tournament. The leagues have individual guidelines for “Script Submission” or “Manuscript Verification.” As mentioned, competitors are usually expected to have their scripts memorized, but sometimes they are allowed to use scripts.
- Most literary interpretation speeches are capped at 10 minutes long, no minimum. Judges are sometimes given flexibility to that maximum time in case audience participation (like laughter) drags the speech past the limit. Sometimes penalties are given for going over the time limit, something for judges to consider on their ballots. The best competitors aim for the 10-minute mark as best they can.
- Students are tasked with “cutting” pieces of literature. Cutting requires reading through, then utilizing the cut-and-paste tool in a word-processing program to extract parts of the literature to make it suitable for presentation. This should be done without disrespecting the content of the original piece, and the script submission rules often require interpers to show what was and wasn’t cut.

- Students are also tasked with “blocking” their piece. Blocking is the interper’s attempt to act out the piece. The interper often jumps between narration and character, and perhaps among several characters, too. Pay close attention to the individual event rules. Most forbid competitors from using props, and sometimes only the speaker’s feet are allowed to touch the floor, so the physical challenge of interpers are great (and impressive!). The best interpers are masters of the space in the competitive room.

Literary interp is an incredibly impressive speech category. If you’ve never seen one of these events, visit YouTube and do a search for literary interpretations. Some of the recordings will certainly entertain you, and you’ll simultaneously get ideas of how to do literary interpretation for competition.

Debate



Debate is a sport, a competition of the mind, that brings out the best from students.

(Two of my alumni students are pictured here in a final round of debate.)

Debate is an entire sport full of rules, new terminology, and a host of jargon to go along with it. Wading through the how-to's is enough to scare off the most determined individual. But hang in there! Debate may be the most rigorous academic activity out there, but it is also the most rewarding. Students – even the most academically challenged – eventually get it and enjoy it.

Easy Explanation of Competitive Debate

A debate consists between two sides of a contentious proposition, one advocating for it and one advocating against it.

That's the "easy" explanation, but it gets much more complicated from there. Debate is much like American football to a European. "Football" to a European is joggers kicking a checkered ball around the field. What does a Manchester United fan know of touchdowns, touchbacks, field goals, blitzes, offsides, clipping, facemasks, interference, 15-yard penalties or extra points (either 1 or 2)? Following American football for the uninitiated is like trying to understand a foreign language!

Only when the game is understood does it become enjoyable.

I have had the opportunity to teach and coach many debaters. My curricula always include time for lengthy class sessions in which I teach the basics of academic debate. Even those who know the ins-and-outs of many debate events need to sometimes return to the basics for a refresher. New debaters often get frustrated at the complexities; sometimes they want to quit. But once they get the chance to jump into a round at their first debate competition, the pieces fall into place. They see their studies pay off and find it to be a lot of fun!

There are several types of debate available to students, and they vary from league to league. Some are one-on-one, others two-on-two, and some even encouraging larger teams, depending on the rules. All debates have a unique topic for a particular time period where sides are assigned to either advocate and defend. The topics are called "resolutions," and they are carefully-worded propositions that kick off a debate round.

Categories of Debate Events

While there are many debate formats, I cover the four most popular formats offered in junior high and high school: Team-Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum and Parliamentary. Let's get our brains around what each debate event requires.

Lincoln-Douglas

Lincoln-Douglas debate's namesake comes from Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas from the 1860s. Most refer to Lincoln-Douglas as "LD" debate, or perhaps "value" debate. *Easy Entry* gives you what you need to know about the exciting competitive event of Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

Lincoln-Douglas debate resolutions are published by participating leagues. Students planning to participate in tournaments will prepare affirmative and negative cases responding to the resolution they will be debating. At the tournament, postings show which side the students will be on. They enter the room, introduce themselves to the judge or panel of judges, and then go through speeches to commence the debate round. The judge renders a balloted decision and awards speaker points to the debaters.

Reasons for Lincoln-Douglas Debate

As stated, the “Lincoln” and the “Douglas” in the name from LD are Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas. The two competed for the senate seat of Illinois in 1858. As part of their campaigning, they scheduled a number of one-on-one debates throughout Illinois. The debates became quite popular, attracting thousands of people to gather in the hot sun and hear the two politicians argue over political issues of the day. Slavery — or, at least, whether Illinois should be neutral in the divisive issue of the times — was one such issue that separated the candidates. Lincoln lost the election, but historians credit the Lincoln-Douglas debates as training grounds for Abe’s successful run for President of the United States.

In the same spirit, Lincoln-Douglas debate students participate in one-on-one debates for judges. Most leagues differentiate from the *political* nature of the original debates and focus instead on the *values* of the debate. Some areas of the country and some collegiate leagues adopt “Lincoln-Douglas Policy,” meaning they adopt policy resolutions within a one-on-one format.

There is much to be gained from learning value debate. The league assigns a resolution of value, meaning there are reasons both sides can give to justify the side they are arguing. The debaters persuade the judge to either affirm the resolution (that is, declare it is *right*) or negate the resolution (declare that it is *not right*).

You will want to visit your league’s website to read the resolution that you will be preparing for competition. Tournaments often will list the resolution on their invitation, and sometimes ballots have the resolutions printed at the top. Here are some examples of Lincoln-Douglas debate resolutions:

- Resolved: When in conflict, governments should value fair trade above free trade.
- Resolved: Criminal procedure should value truth-seeking over individual privacy.

- Resolved: Civil Disobedience in a democracy is morally justified.

Pause and reflect on what debaters learn from this activity. You can imagine the discussions that follow these debates. All of these resolutions challenge the conscience of the debaters, pushing them to embrace values that transcend conventional wisdom or even stated law. Students will explain complex philosophical dilemmas and advocate for wise decision making based on values they articulate. Lincoln-Douglas debate trains young people to not only *do* what is right, but to give a reason for what they choose. Arguably, there are few better activities that encourage students to think through the choices they make from day to day than Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Structure of Lincoln-Douglas Debate

LD debates are one-on-one timed sessions over the course of approximately 45 minutes. Students are assigned either the affirmative or negative side to the resolution, and tournaments try to have the debaters debate both sides evenly throughout. Here's how rounds unfold:

1. **Affirmative Constructive (AC)** - 6 min.

The affirmative gives a prepared six-minute speech presenting her case to the judge. This is followed by a three-minute cross-examination.

2. **Negative Constructive (NC) + First Negative rebuttal (1NR)** - 7 min.

The negative builds a case of his own within the seven-minute timeframe, but also leaves time to rebut the affirmative's case. This is followed with a three-minute cross-examination by the affirmative.

3. **First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)** - 4 min.

The affirmative refutes the negative's speech within four minutes.

4. **Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR)** - 6 min.

The negative refutes the affirmative's speech within six minutes.

5. **Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)** - 3 min.

The affirmative has the last word on the debate within three minutes.

Notice that each speaker gets the same amount of speaking time and the affirmative gets the first and last word. Both sides get to lead (ask) and follow (answer) cross-examination.

Example of a Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Recall that Lincoln-Douglas debate is “value” debate: philosophical in nature, not political or necessarily factual (or truthful). Students are tasked to analyze the resolution within the framework of a value. They have a burden to prove how their value best upholds or negates the resolution, depending on which side they are on (affirmative or negative).

One of the example resolutions above is stated, “Resolved: Criminal procedure should value truth-seeking over individual privacy.” All debaters will prepare cases both for (affirmative) and against (negative) this resolution. Judges will weigh the debating and declare which side best showed the resolution right or wrong. Consider how students and coaches will build their cases.

The affirmative side will try to convince the judge that criminal procedure should value truth-seeking even at the expense of individual privacy. They may value justice or the common good to justify times when individual privacy needs to be compromised for the sake of seeking the truth. Examples like search warrants or special courts that are set up to help law enforcement find the truth would be used to promote the affirmative side of the resolution.

The negative side will try to convince the judge of the exact opposite: that criminal procedure should value individual privacy even at the expense of truth-seeking. The negative may value justice, but sees it in the eyes of the individual being prosecuted by the state. Abuses of individual rights should not be justified in a just world, at least when considering criminal procedure, so the negative side of the resolution is more justified.

Do you see how this debate can unfold into a robust exchange? It’s impressive when you see a hot debate between two sharp debaters. As resolutions change, Lincoln-Douglas debaters prepare arguments and cases for tournaments and continue through the year in LD competition.

Parli

Parliamentary debate (a.k.a. “parli” or sometimes called “world schools” debate) is a form of debating where each team is given a resolution, a set time to prepare, and then they debate.

Different from most other formats is that parli resolutions are written for each round during a tournament. Tournaments and scrimmages match teams up, one side affirming the resolution as

“the government” and the other side negating the resolution as “the opposition.” A judge ranks how well they debated and declares a winner of the debate round.

The origins of parli debate come from Britain, traditionally called “British parliamentary procedure.” Parliamentary procedures are the rules the parliament places upon itself to debate and govern. As early as the 16th century the House of Common in Britain recorded the rules of Parliament, rules that have been modeled by most of the Western democratic world.

In parliamentary government, a resolution is put forth by the government and debate — formal speech times for both sides to present — is given. In parliament, these debates help either push forth the resolution into law or defeat the resolution. In education, a team of students (two, three, or sometimes more) take the side of a resolution (calling themselves the “government”) and another team takes the alternative side (calling themselves the “opposition”).

There is plenty of action in the parli debate world. Today thousands of students participate in classrooms and competitions all over the country in this most invigorating activity. While it may appear complicated to those not familiar with the activity, I believe there is an easy-to-understand structure to parliamentary debate that is actually quite simple.

Structure of Parli Debate

Parli debate is unique from other forms of debate in many ways, and this section attempts to lay these out as you envision yourself participating.

First, a variant among leagues is the number of debaters on the “team.” These can be 2-member, 3-member or even more-member teams that share responsibilities during the round. You may have alternates to your team that sit out of the debate round and help only at prep. Make sure you understand your parli league’s rules so that you and your partner(s) understand what is coming.

Second, while most debate formats have a set resolution for numerous tournaments that debaters can prepare for, parli tournaments release a new resolution every round *during the tournament*. You will receive your resolution shortly before the round, after which you commence with “prep time” to prepare for your debate. You and your parli team will move quickly to formulate your arguments as the timer ticks away.

For prep time, check your tournament rules to make sure you do it right. Time varies greatly among leagues and tournaments, sometimes allowing only 15 minutes or up to an hour to prepare arguments. Some leagues allow internet use, some don't. Some allow collaboration with parents and coaches, some don't. Make sure you understand how to best utilize your prep time during your tournament.

What do you do during prep time? You prepare arguments on a computer (if allowed) or with pen-and-paper. A lot can be said as to how to best prepare speeches, but it is wise for the parli team to first determine the kind of resolution they are debating. There are four general types of resolutions:

1. **Fact.** A resolution that is either true or false. The determining word of a fact resolution is “is” or “is not.” *Resolved: Education is more futile than not.*
2. **Policy.** A resolution that declares the need for a problem to be solved with a proposed policy. The resolution typically calls on a government (e.g. the USFG, or United States Federal Government) to solve the problem. The determining words of a policy resolution can be “shall/should” or “will.” *Resolved: The USFG should reform its education policy.*
3. **Balance.** A resolution that weighs either one way or another, based on how it is written. The introductory word is usually “on balance.” *Resolved: On balance, local government does a better job educating youth than state government.*
4. **Value.** A resolution that weighs values against conflict situations. The resolution calls for debaters to defend a superior value to justify their side of the resolution. *Resolved: Education is overvalued.*

Knowing the type of resolution helps debaters prepare for their speeches. A proctor will come to remind you to go to your room. Your team takes its seats and the debate begins with its first speaker.

Your league or tournament will show you the exact structure of your parli debate. For example's sake, I am taking Stoa's 38-minute 2-on-2 format of parli debate to explain how the round rolls.

1. **Prime Minister Constructive** - 7 min.

The first speaker gives a seven-minute speech presenting his case to the judge.

2. **Leader of Opposition Constructive** - 7 min.

The first opposition speaker gives a seven-minute speech either presenting an alternative case to the resolution or directly refuting the Prime Minister's case.

3. **Member of Government Constructive** - 7 min.

The second government speaker gives a seven-minute speech building their case back up, attacking the Leader of Opposition, or extending their original case.

4. **Member of Opposition Constructive** - 7 min.

The last constructive case, the second opposition speaker gives a seven-minute speech either of new arguments or attacking the Member of Government's arguments.

5. **Leader of Opposition Rebuttal** - 5 min.

The final word of the opposition team.

6. **Prime Minister Rebuttal** - 5 min.

The final word of the government team.

One of the most interesting aspects of parli debate is the interruptions that are allowed of the opposing teams. At certain times during the round debaters may rise from their chairs and ask to be heard. The speaker either grants permission or denies, depending on the time demands. Sometimes debaters stand with palm extended upward as a sign of peace with the other palm on his head, a visual reference to Victorian parli debate: *I come in peace, but I'm keeping my wig on in case it gets windy*. There are two types of interruptions:

1. Points of Information (POI). These are asked in the constructive speeches, typically asked to gain information about the speech being given. The first and last minutes of the constructive speeches are "protected time," meaning opposing teams are not allowed to ask POIs.
2. Points of Order (PO). These are asked in the rebuttal speeches, typically to "cry foul" for new arguments or an abuse of the rebuttal speaker. Time keeping is stopped for POs. The opposing speaker gives reason for the PO and the speaker gives a short rebuttal. The judge will either rule on the PO or ignore it to consider later. When the judge decides, the timer continues as does the debate.

Other considerations with parli debate:

- There is no prep time between speeches. Speakers are expected to get to the lectern right after the previous speech ends.
- Notes and interjections from teammates. Debaters are allowed to interact with their partners during the round, passing notes always allowed. Some leagues allow bursts of comments.
- Audience participation. Most other debate formats forbid heckling; it is encouraged in parli debate. Rapping on tables, knocking, cheering “hear, hear!” are all welcome when good arguments are made. Judges, too, sometimes knock on their table to show agreement. As long as the participation doesn’t disrupt the round, it is a lot of fun and considered appropriate in parli debate rounds.
- Evidence. Since students are not given an ample amount of time to prepare, evidence briefs are not expected to weigh down the round. Common knowledge or understanding of world events should be appealed to, not deep analytical studies that would require strong warranting and citations.

Examples of Parli Resolutions

Parli resolutions are written by the tournament, and they may vary in style and topic. Generally speaking, they follow the types of resolutions listed above. Here are some examples:

1. Aging infrastructure has become an epidemic in the United States.
2. Local governments have the right to protect illegal immigrants from unjust executive mandates.
3. Secret video recordings of public officials in private conversations should not be reported in news media.
4. Xi is good for China.
5. The USFG should substantially increase funding to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.
6. On balance, hunting has been good for natural habitat.
7. NCAA student athletes ought to be recognized as employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act.
8. The robust global economy is a result of Donald Trump’s presidency.
9. Cellphone users do not have 4th Amendment rights over its data.

10. On balance, populism has helped make America great again.
11. America is greater today than November 2016.
12. Welfare inherently hurts the poor.
13. It is sometimes beneficial to assume criminal guilt before a trial of peers.
14. The US economy is more vulnerable today than it was ten years ago.
15. The NBA should allow the use of medical marijuana within the league.
16. Congressional rules should change concerning sexual harassment.
17. Amazon is a monopoly.
18. The Left justifies violence more than the Right.
19. This House will drive the stake through the heart of the vampire.
20. Scenario: Kim Jong-un launches a ballistic missile over Japan intended to land in the Pacific Ocean. US intelligence discovers that the missile malfunctioned and mistakenly landed in northern Japan in a small village community, killing no one. North Korea apologizes for the misfortune, but vows to continue its nuclear and missile testing, claiming the misfortune was only brought on by the continued hostility from America. Resolved: The US shall attack North Korea to overthrow Kim Jong-un.

You can see several resolutions that cover *fact*, *policy*, *balance* and *value* conflicts. There are a couple of others that are unique. A “metaphor” resolution challenges the government to make a strong comparison, just as #19 does, and who knows what the debaters will come up with. The last one is called a “scenario.” This is a unique resolution where debaters get to conclude on a hypothetical situation, or even rewrite history.

Policy

Policy debate is the oldest format of high school debate, its origins dating back to the 1930s. Depending on the league or region you are competing, this format is referred to as *team-policy*, *cross-examination debate*, *CX*, or (as I prefer to call it) just plain *policy*. Let’s dig into the *Easy Entry* to policy debate.

Policy debate consists of two debaters on each team, essentially a 2-on-2 scrimmage, who enter a room of a tournament to debate for a judge. The students have prepared materials and timed speeches to deliver, and the judge assesses the debaters and renders a balloted decision. The resolution addresses a political topic of some sort that the league sets forth for everyone

competing in the event. To prepare for tournaments, debaters write affirmative cases (arguing *for* the resolution) as well as prepare negative briefs (getting ready to argue *against* cases).

Reasons for Policy Debate

I invited a retired United States Air Force pilot to judge a debate round last year. He watched my daughters debate and came out of the first round utterly amazed. “Wow!” he exclaimed, “I cannot believe how impressive that was!” He has returned several times throughout the year to judge rounds and appears to not get enough of it.

This is a common reaction from people who observe policy debate: “Wow!” The kids speak quickly, they exchange evidence and briefs, they give arguments swiftly and respond to them just as fast. Sometimes they make an observer’s head spin! But they always impress.

Policy debate brings incredible opportunities to students. The thinking and research skills necessary to succeed are second-to-none. Colleges and businesses know this. They’re able to pick a former debater out from the crowd any day. If you’re a parent, I know exactly why you’re here: *You want your kid to be as impressive as those policy debaters!*

The Structure of Policy Debate

It is helpful to understand the “team” and “policy” elements of policy debate. Both have structural elements to them that will help you prepare for a successful year of competition.

“Team” means that debate teams consist of two debaters each. The debaters enter the room of a tournament knowing which speeches they will run and will have trained for a division of labor between them. Here is a rundown of responsibilities between the two sides, and an explanation of the duties for each speech:

- 1. First Affirmative Constructive (1AC) - 8 min.**

The 1A gives a prepared eight-minute speech presenting his case to the judge. This is followed with a three-minute cross-examination by the 2N.

- 2. First Negative Constructive (1NC) - 8 min.**

The 1N addresses much of the 1A’s case within the eight-minute timeframe. This is followed with a three-minute cross-examination by the 1A.

3. **Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)** - 8 min.

The 2A refutes the 1N's speech within eight minutes. This is followed with a three-minute cross-examination by the 1N.

4. **Second Negative Constructive (2NC)** - 8 min.

The 2N runs various arguments against the affirmative case. This is followed with a three-minute cross-examination by the 2A.

5. **First Negative Rebuttal (1NR)** - 5 min.

The 1N gives a five-minute rebuttal primarily to the 2AC.

6. **First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)** - 5 min.

The 1A gives a five-minute rebuttal to the two previous negative speeches.

7. **Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR)** - 5 min.

The 2N sums up the round and urges a negative ballot.

8. **Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)** - 5 min.

The 2A sums up the round and urges an affirmative ballot.

It may seem complicated, but that stress will melt away when you watch it work and get used to the even exchange of ideas. There are some basic understandings in policy debate that will help you grasp the competitive nature of this event. Notice the following in a typical 90-minute debate round:

- The affirmative team speaks first and last. This is because the affirmative team has what's called the "burden of proof." They must convince the judge to change the status quo. The negative team rests with "presumption," meaning that if the affirmative fails to uphold their burden of proof, the negative should win. Of course, this is debate theory (there is no rule that states this must exist in every round), but it helps us understand why the affirmative has the first and last word in the round.
- The negative team has 13 minutes of speaking time in the middle (speeches 4 and 5), right next to each other. This is called the "negative block," and it is a strategy for negative debaters to split the responsibilities between the two speeches.
- The debate round is divided into two parts: the constructives and the rebuttals. The names reflect what happens. The constructive speeches build arguments, and the rebuttals refute what the constructives bring up. New arguments should not appear in the rebuttals.

- The cross-examinations, also called CX or cross-ex, are timed exchanges between the debaters. Every debater is allowed three minutes to ask questions of an opponent, and another three minutes to answer questions delivered to him or her. Debaters should not make arguments in CX, but should carry any admissions in the CX into their speeches.

Policy resolutions are political in nature. Every year various leagues announce either foreign or domestic topics to debate. Leagues typically set forth one resolution per year, though there are some unique policy debate formats that allow for more. Here are some examples of resolutions from previous years among various leagues:

- Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its energy policy.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce Direct Commercial Sales and/or Foreign Military Sales of arms from the United States.
- Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its banking, finance, and/or monetary policy.

Example of Policy Debate

Policy resolutions are written to call on an actor — usually the U.S. government — to change a problem in the status quo. Take, for example, a resolution from above: “Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its energy policy.”

Debaters will start the year off with research. What exactly is the energy policy of the United States Federal Government? When that is answered, what exactly is *wrong* with today’s policy? These fundamental questions are answered early in the year.

Debaters will prepare affirmative cases that “affirm” the resolution. They will enter a tournament with a debate case that calls for the judge to pass the policy that the debaters put forth. The case will typically present a problem in the status quo, explain a solution for the problem, and explain why the proposed solution will solve the problem.

The negative will try to convince the judge that the affirmative failed in some way that calls for the presumption to keep things the way they are. They often do this by proving one of four arguments called “stock issues.” These include:

- Topicality. The negative may claim that the affirmative team failed to uphold the resolution. The affirmative team would show how it did.
- Significance. The negative may claim that the problem isn't significant enough to justify the new policy. The affirmative would show that it is.
- Inherency. The negative may claim that the problems presented will be solved without changing anything. The affirmative would show that their plan is needed for change.
- Solvency. The negative may claim that the presented problems will not be solved by the presented plan. The affirmative would show how all the cited problems would be solved with their plan.

The exchange will go on between the four debaters for the entire hour-and-a-half. Evidence will be exchanged and arguments will flow through the round. In the end, the judge or judge panel will decide whether to “pass” the affirmative’s plan or let the status quo remain as it is.

Public Forum

Public Forum Debate is a 2-on-2 debate format hosted by the National Speech and Debate Association. They debate balanced resolutions that are released monthly by the league. Let’s unpack the details of public forum to make it easy to enter.

Public forum debate is the exciting educational opportunity where you and a partner get to develop cases to advocate for and against a particular topic. You will also scrimmage against other teams who are doing the same, whereas you get to oppose their cases. Judges and teachers rank how well you debated and they declare a winner of your debate round.

Structure of Public Forum Debate

Debaters find the subject of discussion in the resolution. One side will support the resolution as the “PRO” team, and the other team (the “CON”) will oppose. All teams (consisting of two students) must prepare to support (PRO) and negate (CON) the resolution, since they may choose either position right before a debate round starts. The entire debate is set around the resolution.

When you begin a public forum debate round, two directives need to be determined: (1) the side of the resolution you will be arguing, and (2) the speaker order you will be taking. NSDA rules

require each round to begin with a coin toss to determine which of these you will take. You will enter the room prepared to win the toss (and make the best choice for you) or lose the toss (and get the worst choice for you). The winning team of the coin toss will get to choose first—which side of the resolution (PRO or CON) *or* which speaker order (first or second). The losing team gets to choose the one the winning team *didn't* pick.

Envision four debaters — two on the PRO and two on the CON — sitting at two tables, each on the side of a lectern. The lectern faces the judge, typically a teacher, an alumni graduate debater, a parent, or a community member who has been asked to participate. The judge has a ballot and a flowsheet to take notes during the debate. The round will last 35-45 minutes, of which each speaker will speak only for 6 minutes, plus 6 minutes of crossfire (where speakers ask each other questions). Total speaking time: 12 minutes each.

Here are the speeches and the time they are allotted. There are four speaker positions: A1, A2, B1 and B2.

1. **Team A, 1st Speaker (A1)** – “Constructive Speech” – 4 minutes

2. **Team B, 1st Speaker (B1)** – “Constructive Speech” – 4 minutes

Crossfire: A1 and B1 ask questions of one another – 3 minutes

3. **Team A, 2nd Speaker (A2)** – “Rebuttal Speech” – 4 minutes

4. **Team B, 2nd Speaker (B2)** – “Rebuttal Speech” – 4 minutes

Crossfire: A2 and B2 ask questions of one another – 3 minutes

5. **Team A, 1st Speaker (A1)** – “Summary” – 2 minutes

6. **Team B, 1st Speaker (B1)** – “Summary” – 2 minutes

Grand Crossfire: All four speakers ask questions of each other – 3 minutes

7. **Team A, 2nd Speaker (A2)** – “Final Focus” – 2 minutes

8. **Team B, 2nd Speaker (B2)** – “Final Focus” – 2 minutes

There is also an allotment of two minutes for each team that is measured throughout the round that can be used in between speeches for preparation (“prep time”). During the time between the end of the previous speech and the beginning of prep time the debater can ask to see any evidence read in the previous speeches. While waiting for the team to produce this evidence, debaters do not prep. After evidence is exchanged, prep time begins. The two minutes can be

budgeted in any fashion by each team — they can use a little bit of it before each speech, or they could use it all before one speech and none before any of the others.

Understanding the Release of Resolutions

The NSDA releases their resolutions a month ahead of when tournaments run. This gives students and coaches time to study and prepare for competition. The resolutions can be seen at Speechanddebate.org/topics. Debaters should bookmark this web address into their preferred browser, as they will visit it often as the year progresses. There are three areas on this page that matter much to the public forum debater.

- **Current Topics.** There are several debate formats that the NSDA provides, but public forum is the one that changes the most often. The “current” topic is the one that is being debated at present tournaments.
- **Announced Topics.** Most of the topics are announced one month prior to debating. Tournament dates are likely already set, but you can prepare ahead of time when you know the topics that were announced.
- **Potential Topics.** The league announces potential topics that member coaches have decided to choose throughout the year. You won’t know exactly what topics will be announced nor how narrow the resolution will be about the topics, but you will have an idea of the topic areas that you can study.
- **Past Topics.** If interested, you can explore past topics dating all the way back to 2002 when public forum became an official NSDA event. The first PF resolution was, “Resolved: Commercial airline pilots should be armed in the cockpit.”

Tournaments



There is little more rewarding than walking across the stage for your award.

(Photo taken of one of my students winning the national title in Lincoln-Douglas debate.)

The conclusion to *Easy Entry* is your first tournament. It will be here before you know it! This probably infuses some nervousness in you, but you are read-up and prepared for competition. You just finished the book you needed.

Preparing for Your First Competition

The following scope and sequence is one that I have used for years, guiding several national champions down its successful road. Consider this four-unit map as a pathway to your success.

Mark your calendar for your first tournament. Pace yourself to walk through four units of study that will prepare you for the events you plan to enter. A marginal timeline of twelve weeks (three weeks each unit) is reasonable, but a sharp student could pull it together in half the time. The point of pacing yourself is that you will walk through a learning sequence of understanding, learning, modeling, and competing. More specifically, the four units will consist of:

UNDERSTANDING	LEARNING	MODELING	COMPETE
<p>Unit I: Structure</p> <p>Gain an understanding of the essentials for the speech or debate event. Study the demands and responsibilities you have as a competitor.</p>	<p>Unit II: Strategy</p> <p>Develop your speech or develop your debate case and accompanying briefs.</p>	<p>Unit III: Model the Champs</p> <p>Study the champion competitors before you and take cues from successful debaters. Modeling is the “secret sauce” of every polished competitor.</p>	<p>Unit IV: Competition</p> <p>Practice makes perfect! Scrimmage with teammates and perform speeches for friends and family. Polish your presentation and arguments for your first competition.</p>

Consider Units I and II your educational venture through the complexities of your speech or debate event. The easy explanations in the previous chapters of this book are good starts, but you should dive deeper when you decide to compete in particular events. Get ready to do a lot of studying through new vocabulary and ideas that may seem cumbersome at first, but they are necessary foundations for competing. You do the actual presenting in Units III and IV.

If you are a teacher or coach, create lessons that walk through each of these units, and use the sampler material that Monument Members provides every summer in anticipation of the new competitive season (see More Offers at the end of this book). Your lessons should follow the twelve-week pathway as loyally as possible, leading your students through the structure, strategy, modeling and competing units.

I wrote three textbooks that mapped out a sequence for three specific styles of debate (policy, Lincoln-Douglas, public forum), but the map can be easily modified for any speech or debate

event. For example sake, take a look at the sequence I developed in *Blue Book for Policy Debate* (Monument Publishing, 2016):

Lesson	Title	Objective
Unit I	Structure of Policy Debate	
Lesson 1	Basic Preparation for Policy Debate	<i>Learn the structure of policy debate.</i>
Lesson 2	Speaker Responsibilities	<i>Learn the responsibilities of each speech in the round, paying special attention to the speeches assigned to you.</i>
Lesson 3	Flowing	<i>Learn why flowing is so important and how to effectively flow and pre-flow constructive and rebuttal speeches.</i>
Unit II	Strategy of Debate Cases	
Lesson 4	Elements of an Affirmative Case	<i>Understand the elements of a strong affirmative case.</i>
Lesson 5	Stock Issues and Other Elements of Debate	<i>Learn the stock issues of topicality, significance, inherency, and solvency—as well as other elements to a debate.</i>
Lesson 6	Research	<i>Learn how to research qualified and persuasive evidence that supports the positions being advocated during a debate.</i>
Unit III	Model Resolutions for Your Debates	
Lesson 7	Domestic Surveillance	<i>“Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially curtail its domestic surveillance.”</i>
Lesson 8	Federal Court Reform	<i>“Resolved: That the United States Federal Court system should be significantly reformed.”</i>
Lesson 9	Trade With China	<i>“Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reform its trade policy with China.”</i>
Unit IV	Ready for Competition	
Lesson 10	Your Policy Debate League	<i>Learn about the opportunities offered by each league and how to initially prepare for your first tournament.</i>
Lesson 11	Understanding the Status Quo	<i>Study the Status Quo chapter provided in your league-specific download and master the current status of the topic.</i>
Lesson 12	Spotlight Cases	<i>Select one of three Spotlight Cases to your league’s specific resolution, as well as prepare a more diverse negative strategy.</i>

Do you see how this guides you all the way to your first tournament? If you follow these units, you will certainly be ahead of your fellow competitors. So, mark that calendar and get to work!

See You in Competition!

The jocks of my day (1970s-1980s) were football players. They were the cool kids who walked on air through the hallways of school. Everyone wanted to be like the quarterback or wide receiver who scored the big touchdown in the last week’s game.

I train different kinds of “jocks,” and they are way cooler: *speakers and debaters*. And oh, my. Compared to football, this “academic sport” is much more rewarding. Nothing against young

kids smashing helmeted heads against each other, if that's your thing. I have higher aspirations for my kids, so I have them in speech and debate.

Speech and debate kids grow the most important skills of communication, leadership, and confidence that goes with them throughout their lives. I could boast all day long on the success of my kids and my students, how they were accepted into top colleges, earned thousands in scholarships, breezed into top-paying jobs, and are today's executives and business owners. As a teacher and coach, it is tremendously rewarding to see how speech and debate kids are “a head above the rest,” in school and beyond.

You started this book a bit overwhelmed, I’m sure. But I hope that now you have a firm grasp of the expectations in the world of speech and debate. Perhaps you now see how “easy” it is to enter the fray and succeed at it.

More Offers



As you continue your “easy entry” into speech and debate, I have more to offer you.

(Pictured: Two of my daughters as a policy debate team in 2017.)

I cannot say enough about the wonderful community of people you are getting involved with. And I’m glad you finished the entry-level book *Easy Entry to the World of Speech and Debate*.

But now I want to direct you to more resources and materials that I have to offer beyond this book. These offers bring you to the next level: winning some trophies and impacting the world!

Become a Monument Member

This book is your “easy entry,” but Monument Membership is community you want to be a part of to succeed. This is a members-only website dedicated to providing the absolute best guidance for success in speech and debate. No doubt about it. Monument Members receive the best coaching, the best teaching, the best source material available.

Here’s how membership works. Every Monday morning at 5:00 am *sharp*, you receive access to professionally published source material. This source material is written by the most valuable coaches in the country. I personally contract these coaches and edit their material for publication and release. Members consume the material on a steady weekly schedule throughout the year. This simple and easy dose of coaching becomes the driving fuel for a most successful competitive season.

Here’s everything you get as a Monument Member:

- **Complete Current Season Access.** You get every single case, brief, article and download prepared for the current season — specific to every event, resolution, and league.
- **Introductory Course “Keys to Speech and Debate Success.”** Four 15-minute videos revealing the four “keys” to successful competition that is proven to build up winning students from start to finish.
- **Individual Coaching Requests.** You get access to our Coaching Request Form for individual responses to any hot case or argument sweeping your area. Shoot us a flow and our coaches are on it!
- **Free Training Videos.** Each event comes with certain training videos sizing up the perspective each competitor needs to have, plus direction on how to maximize the member benefits for the specific event.
- **Members-only Store + Free Shipping.** Any physical textbook, flowsheets, teachers manual, etc. from Monument Publishing comes with free shipping. We send special membership discounts now and then, too!

Whether you’re a student, coach, teacher, or parent, you will find the source material to be incredibly valuable to your preparation. Join the membership at MonumentMembers.com.

Get Involved Locally

This book pushes you in the direction you should go, and that may take some research on your part to figure out what is going on in your town, county, state or region. I'm quite networked with the leagues, and I know a ton of people all over the country. Contact me personally if you need guidance to find other speech and debate enthusiasts in your area.

And if you're in the Colorado Springs area, let's connect! I teach at Monument Academy, a charter school in Monument. My speech and debate club meets weekly to prepare for tournaments in the Colorado Springs and Denver areas. My school considers the club an after-school sport, and we welcome homeschoolers into our meetings and competitions. If you are interested and able, join the Monument Academy Speech and Debate Club.

The best way to connect with me is through my personal website ChrisJeub.com.

Become a Patron

As you know, I am an English teacher and speech and debate coach, but I am also an avid writer. Have been for decades! All my resources are readily available at my website ChrisJeub.com. Resources include some of the speech and debate textbooks mentioned in *Easy Entry*, but also contains literature and non-fiction books you may appreciate.

There is an option to become a supporter of what I do, essentially becoming a “patron” of my work. As a school teacher I set aside my summers and many of my holidays to develop resources to help people like you. Patronage includes a monthly gift through my website that helps me finance these projects and grow them in the future.

And there is much more to patronage than your donation. Patrons receive free resources, exclusive downloads, and the “inside scoop” on my current writing projects. My patron community is growing, and I invite you to join me at ChrisJeub.com/patron.

More Offers to Come

I am 100% committed to you and your success. If I had more time and resources available, I'd be doing much, much more for you. But you are on my mailing list and on my mind now, so you'll

receive information on new offers in the future. As time and resources become available, you may expect the following announcements:

- Summer Camps. I love to host debate camps, and I used to do them full-time. Trust me, I make it fun and challenging, typically diving into league resolutions through research and scrimmaging. Camp is a fantastic way to kick off the year!
- Nationals Prep. If and when you make it to your national tournament, I'll pull some training together. This will likely be online for Monument Members, but if location and timing fits, we host Nationals Intensive Training Camps for some of the leagues.
- Online Courses. I will continue to develop course material, particularly for Monument Members. Watch for announcements when they're released. I sometimes offer new courses for free when I launch them.
- Textbooks. I have several texts that I have written and co-authored that need revamping. Textbooks are a fantastic way for speakers and debaters to dig deep into specific speech and debate events. Watch for these announcements in coming years.
- *For Action Camp*. This was a unique camp I ran only once in 2013, focusing on graduates of the speech and debate community and launching them into the world. I so want to resurrect this unique camp idea, so watch for the announcement.

Conclusion



The community of speech and debate is the best on the planet.

(Selfie taken at one of my debate camps in Colorado.)

Well, did I make this “easy”? I hope I did. Now focus on the second word in this book’s title: “Entry.”

You’re now in the community, my friend. You’ve entered. We’ll likely see each other at some tournaments. Soon!