



queenslanddebatingunion

Parents/Guardians Guide

It's an exciting time when your child signs up for debating; they are embarking on an intellectual journey that will teach them much about the world, critical thinking, and how to win arguments with you. This guide was prepared to help parents know how best to foster debating success in their children.

1. Most importantly, remember that debating is a learning activity. It's designed to help students practice public speaking and logical thinking, not to help them practice saying words that someone else wrote for them. Ultimately, while it's nice to win debates using a fantastic speech prepared by a parent, it's better that your child uses their own ideas and their own words, even if you don't think their arguments are as good as they could be. It's better to talk through the debate with your child, and the arguments decided on by their team, and then let them write their speech themselves. Once it's written, feel free to make minor adjustments while they're rehearsing, but make sure the majority of their work is in their own words. Not only does that help them learn better, but students are actually more likely to do well with their own work—adjudicators can tell when a student doesn't understand the argument they're making!
2. Many of the long preparation topics that we set are inspired by topical events. If your child is struggling to understand the topic, a really good first step is Google.
3. Debating is a team activity, not an individual one. That means most decisions need to be made at team meetings in consultation with the team and the coach if they have one. Try not to radically reimagine what your child has decided in a team meeting; it might contradict the strategy agreed upon by the team, or accidentally step on the toes of another speaker who is making a different argument.
4. Losing debates is always hard, and it's even harder if you think the adjudicator has made the wrong decision. Remind your child that debating is meant to be an enjoyable recreational activity, and that they shouldn't take a loss too seriously. Sometimes, losing a debate can be a much better learning experience than winning a debate, because you learn a lot about what adjudicators are looking for. It's not always productive to be critical of an adjudicator just because they gave the debate against you; even if you thought the adjudicator was wrong, bad mouthing that adjudicator can stop your child from learning what they could have done better.
5. Outside of the four preliminary rounds (and the finals in the senior competition), there are lots of opportunities to improve at debating in QLD. All students are welcome to attend the Summer Schools that we offer at the start of February in all regions. Even if your child doesn't make the grand final, it can be helpful to go along to the finals (held in late August) to see some particularly high quality debates taking place.



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6. For children in years 10-12 there are even more opportunities-your child can trial to represent the state in our state team trials process (the details of which can be found on our website under the “State Team” Tab). They could also come along to one of our special development days, like our women’s competition or State sector competitions both are held early in Term 4. If you think your child would be interested, get in touch with your school’s debating coordinator.
7. If you wish to view your child’s draw (including where and when they’re debating), you can do so on our competition management system (CMS). Go to the CMS homepage at <https://cms.qdu.org.au>, then click on “To view debates and results for every team, CLICK HERE”. This will take you to a page with a drop down menu. Choose the appropriate competition based on the year, the age of your child and your school’s location. Note that the Junior Secondary Competition refers to Year 7, the Primary School Competition refers to years 5 and 6, and the Secondary Competition refers to years 8-12 and senior A. Once you have selected a competition, a second menu will appear asking you to select a school. Once you have picked your school, an optional menu will appear asking you to select a team. The default option is to display every team from that school, but you can also select your child’s team specifically. Once you have selected the team, click Submit. The CMS should display the times, venues, sides, oppositions and topics for all future debates. It will also display the results of past debates. If your team has qualified for the finals, it will display the entire draw for that team up until the grand final.

Guide for watching debates:

If you’re able to, watching your child debate is hugely beneficial. It gives the event a sense of purpose for your child, and will help you better understand what debating is like for your child. We deliberately schedule debates at a range of times on Wednesday Evenings so that parents will hopefully be able to make at least one of their kids’ debates throughout the season. It’s important that everyone watching the debate displays proper etiquette and conduct. Here are some tips:

1. Be encouraging to everyone. Much though you may feel the opposition’s arguments are silly, or that it might be helping your child, try to avoid shaking your head or appearing obviously disdainful while your opposition are speaking. Imagine how you would feel if a parent of the opposition displayed that kind of conduct while your child was speaking.
2. Encourage your child to get feedback from the adjudicator after the debate. Adjudicators are instructed to keep their oral adjudications short and to the point, and often they have lots more helpful thoughts to add after the debate is over.
3. Unfortunately, the QDU has strict rules against filming and photography during debates as part of our child protection obligations. Filming or photographing the debate will cause your team to receive a loss.