

# DEBATING TIPS

Debating is a major part of your job as an MYP. Once you get the hang of it you'll really enjoy it, even though it can be quite daunting at first. If you follow our simple tips you'll be a debating pro in no time!

Debates can take any form; you may be invited to a formal debate like Question Time or it may be an informal debate, such as a debate over transport with your Local Authority. Whatever the circumstances make sure you're prepared!

## BEFORE THE DEBATE

### Dress:

Wear whatever you like and feel comfortable in. If you turn up in jeans and a hoody and everyone else is in suits, don't feel embarrassed. Try and dress to the occasion though and gauge what it's going to be like. If you don't know then do some research.

### What to take:

Take paper, pens, any articles, magazines and books you find

useful. It's vital to do some research on the subject(s) you're debating before you go.

Try to get some facts and statistics or quotes from relevant people from the internet, newspapers or books about your subject. This will give your argument more strength once you get debating. Even if you don't use them it's always good to be prepared.

Make sure you take paper and a pen. When you're debating it's good to jot down some notes of what people are saying or questions they are asking, so you can respond to their comments when you speak.

## THE DEBATE

### Skills:

Find a style that suits you. Some good debaters use humour and wit whilst others are calm and logical, but don't over do it by trying a comedy routine or coming across as full of yourself and arrogant! Make sure you find a style that suits your personality and one you're comfortable with.



## Speaking:

It's vital to talk at a pace which is fast enough to sound knowledgeable about the subject and allow you time to say what you want, but slow enough to be easily understood.

Be very sensitive to the reactions of others. If you are talking as fast as you would in a normal conversation then that is too fast. Variation in speed can allow you to emphasise particular points, but the

variation should be subtle or you will sound unnatural.

Also try and vary your tone, don't stick to one tone of voice otherwise your audience will fall asleep, but don't go to extremes because that will only sound daft.

Volume is another important factor. Speak so people can comfortably hear you but don't shout, unless the debate is getting really heated and shouting is required.



MYPs debating at the 2009 Annual Sitting

Try to use words people can understand as your audience will feel comfortable with this and it's easy on the ear.

Stay away from sentence fillers such as erm, um, er, yeah and y'know. You've heard people do it and it's irritating, and instead of listening to you people end up counting your sentence fillers.

If you don't know what to say, take a couple of seconds to think and then get back to debating, or stay ahead of what you're saying. You should be thinking of what you're about to say before it actually comes out. This stops you from filling your sentences up!

## **NOTES**

Notes are essential, but they must be brief and well organised to be effective. Most people sketch out the main subjects likely to be debated, with brief notes under each. When writing notes during the debate, it is usually better to use a separate sheet of paper so you can take down the details of what the other speakers have said and then transfer a rough outline onto the notes you will actually be using.

**Good luck debating!**