

## Macra na Feirme Debating Tips



### Preparation for the Debate

*(What to do when you decide to participate in the debating competition)*

Ten days before the debate takes place you will receive your motion.

- The team meets with their mentor to discuss the motion.
- The team defines each section of the motion, paying attention to key words and idioms.
- The team then splits the arguments giving each team member responsibility for different aspects of the team's presentation.



### Research

Don't forget to look at both sides of the motion – it is important to know what your opponents' arguments might be!

- Research can take many forms – Websites, surveys, newspapers, periodicals, personal experience – the list is endless.

## Writing your speech.



Each speaker has **six** minutes to speak.

- Time your speech to make sure you use all your time – without going over – a bell with ring when you have one minute left of allocated time.
- Don't try to cram too much information into your speech.
- Find some solid facts to strengthen your arguments and make sure to quote your source.
- Ensure your points flow nicely together – adjudicators prefer clarity and logical thought.
- Refer to the marks in your section of the score sheet and use this as a guide. Remember to leave time in your speech for refutation or rebuttal.



## Practice, Practice, Practice!

- The team should continue to meet as speeches are being drafted to ensure team members are presenting related and not repetitive points.
- If possible, practice in front of an audience (other club members). The more comfortable and convinced you are of the points you are making, the easier it will be to convince others – especially the adjudicators.
- Remember to have additional, relevant information for rebuttal.

- Try to predict what the other team will say and keep some statistics that could be used to counteract their arguments.

## On the Night



When you are speaking. -

- Use your notes as little as possible.
- Pace yourself; do not speak too fast – allow the adjudicators and audience to follow your speech.
- Be confident, enjoy yourself and be passionate about the subject (even if you're shaking like a leaf!)
- Keep your voice clear and remember you know more about the subject than your audience does.
- Quote sources for statistics and facts.
- If you have a team line of argument, use it sparingly and to emphasise points – don't bore the adjudicators or your audience with it.
- Remember to use your wit – humour really livens up a debate.

## Have a Go!

- It is essential that each speaker attempts to “have a go” at their opponents' arguments .
- 30% of a team's marks are given for refutation.
- Try to convince the adjudicators how “absurd” your opponent's arguments are.

- Also, try not to tack your refutation onto the beginning or end of your speech. Try to weave it into the body of your speech and time it well to emphasise the points you are making.

### **Active Listening**

Throughout the debate you and your team should be watching out for points from the opposition that you can refute or rebut. Jot down notes to call into question the arguments of the other team. Where necessary pass these to team members yet to speak.



### **Drum up Support!**

Don't forget to bring along supporters on the night to cheer you on. It's a great help for a nervous competitor to see familiar faces in the audience. It also helps to create a good atmosphere!



## **Mentors / Coaches.**

There are many very experienced debaters that have passed through Macra. Most counties/regions would have a list of possible mentors / coaches. If it is proving difficult in your county/region to get help, contact national office for assistance.

