

Goal • Review and use the process of a formal debate.

A Formal Debate

A formal debate has an orderly step-by-step procedure that is followed by people with opposing or contradictory views of issues.

Role of Chair

A debate usually starts with a Debate Chair, who states the issue using the following formula:

“Be it resolved that ...”

For example: Be it resolved that genetically modified crops are an environmentally responsible method of increasing food production.

The Debate Chair also introduces the rules, the speakers, and the order in which they will speak.

At the end of the debate, the Debate Chair asks debaters to leave the room. The Chair then holds a vote to determine which side made the best points. It is the Debate Chair who announces the winner of the debate.

Speakers

There are usually four speakers, although there can be more. There must be the same number of speakers for and against the resolution.

Usually, two speakers speak in favour of the resolution. This is called the Affirmative or Pro side. Two speakers speak against the resolution. This is the Negative or Con side.

The speakers present in a specific order, which is outlined in the table below.

After the first four speakers, the Debate Chair announces a break for no more than 3 min. During that time, members of each team can discuss the issues. At the end of the break, there are two last speakers. These speakers are often the first speakers for each team; however, the teams may use a third speaker at this time. This decision needs to be made before the debate begins.



Order	Speaker	Speaking Time	Job
1	Speaker #1 for the Affirmative	3 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – clarifies the resolution or issue – argues in support of the resolution – often introduces a plan showing how the resolution could be implemented
2	Speaker #1 for the Negative	3 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – challenges the definitions, arguments, and evidence – argues against the resolution with new points – sums up why Speaker #1 was wrong or misguided, and why the negative position is preferred.
3	Speaker #2 for the Affirmative	3 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – counters the arguments by Speaker #1 for the Negative – reiterates the good points made by Speaker #1 for the Affirmative – may add some new points supporting the resolution
4	Speaker #2 for the Negative	3 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – makes any new points – counters specific points of Affirmative position – clarifies the position of the Negative view
5	Speaker for the Negative	2 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – points out where Affirmative speakers have failed to prove their points – sums up the Negative position
6	Speaker for the Affirmative	2 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – points out where Negative team failed to prove its points – makes a final review of the Affirmative position

