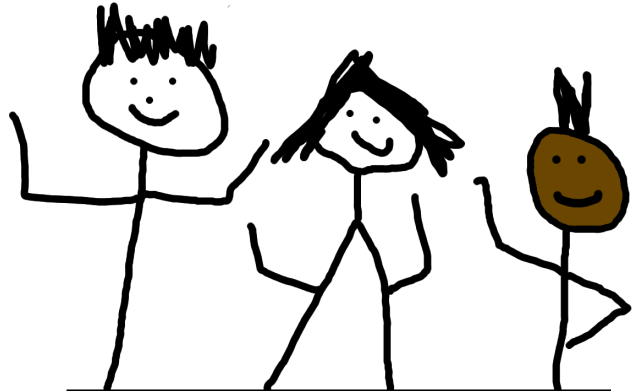




# Aberystwyth Debating Union

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# Debating for Noobs



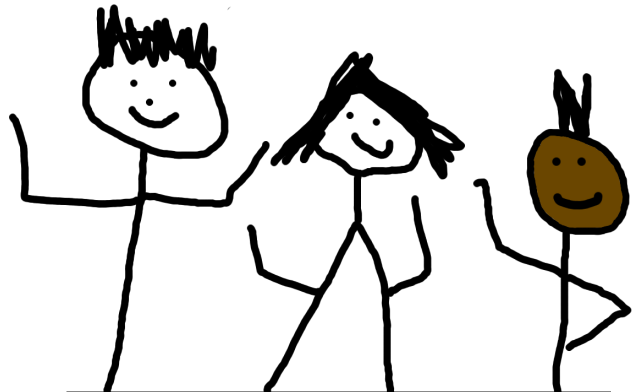
By Hamish Arnold (with some help from people called David, Mike and Reetta)



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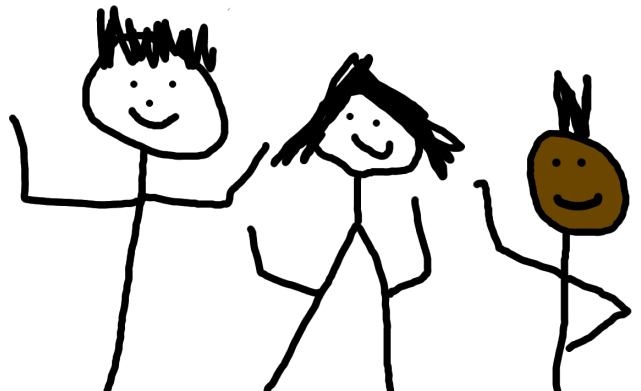
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This is just a beginners guide, (hence the title) which means that the information in here is not exhaustive nor is it intended to be.

If a judge gives you advice that appears to contradict the advice in this booklet, that's probably because this booklet only covers what you should do *most* of the time. There are lots of nuances and subtleties left unsaid for simplicities sake, which means that if you get contradictory advice you should listen and learn.

Well, either that or the judge is shit.

Enjoy!

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If you have any questions contact me at [hamisharnold@gmail.com](mailto:hamisharnold@gmail.com)

### More Glossary

#### Status Quo

The current or existing state of affairs

#### Truism

Something that is demonstrably true and cannot be argued.

Here endeth the booklet.  
Now go and read it again.

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**Glossary continued.**

## Point of Clash

An area where the proposition and opposition disagree.

## Point of Information (POI)

If an opposing team makes a point you disagree with you can offer a point of information. Try to keep your point to no more than 15 seconds.

## Protected Time

This is the first and final minutes of your speech where the other teams are not allowed to offer points of information

## Rebuttal

This is where you explain why what has been said by the opposite side is wrong.

## Squirreling

This is defining the motion in such a way as to create a completely different debate to the more obvious interpretation of the debate. It will usually get you an automatic 4th.

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## Format of a Debate

### Teams

There are four teams, each consisting of two people. Two teams speak in favour of the motion (proposition) and two teams speak in against the motion (opposition).

### Speeches

A speech will generally last for 5 minutes. During this time a time keeper will make a banging noise at certain intervals.

- The 1st bang indicates that you have been speaking for one minute.
- The 2nd bang indicates that you have been speaking for 4 minutes.
- The 3rd (double) bang indicated that your 5 minutes have elapsed and it's time to sum up your speech
- Repeated bangs means that you need to sit down and shut up.

Between the 1st and 2nd bangs opposing teams are allowed to offer points of information.

## Glossary

### Assertion

Where you make a statement without explaining it. e.g. "Socialised Health Care is bad."

### Counter-Prop

This is where the opposition come up with their own proposition rather than simply defending the status quo.

### Debating Wanker

Usually seen with other debating wankers; very cliquey, usually male from a wealthy background. Best avoided, especially in bed.

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A definition of the change that is going to be made and by whom. This is the mechanism plus who will do it and when they will do it.

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## Alternative names for things

Sometimes you'll hear terminology used which is unfamiliar to you. Often it's just a different name for the same thing so here's a table to explain them:

Name	Pretentious Name
1st Proposition/Opposition (teams)	Opening Government/Opposition
2nd Proposition/Opposition (teams)	Closing Government/Opposition
1st Proposition (speaker)	Prime Minister
1st Opposition (speaker)	Leader of the Opposition
2nd Proposition (speaker)	Deputy Prime Minister
2nd Opposition (speaker)	Deputy Leader of the Opposition
3rd Proposition (extension speaker)	Member of Government
3rd Opposition (extension speaker)	Member of the Opposition
4th Proposition (summary speaker)	Government Whip
4th Opposition (summary speaker)	Opposition Whip

## Things you should do

- Structure your speeches. Judges can't easily follow unstructured speeches.
- Signpost. When you're moving onto your next point say so.
- Identify and debate on the underlying principles of the motion, e.g. in a debate on the nationalisation of the railways you might explain the economic principles behind it.
- Accept a single point of information.
- Offer plenty of POIs (points of information) to the other side.
- You can offer POIs by standing up and saying "point of information" or "on that point" or similar.
- Listen and learn from the feedback you get given.
- Explain everything (see argumentation flowchart).

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## Things you shouldn't do

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- Contradict your own team. This is known as knifing and will often get you an automatic 4th.
- Accept more than one POI per speech.
- Assert things as true without explaining them (see argumentation flow chart).
- Forget to signpost (telling the judges when you're moving on to your next point)
- Cite studies or statistics – no one can verify them. It's ok to explain how a study reached it's conclusion as an argument but citing it in a vacuum will not get you any credit.

## Structure of a Summary Speech

- Introduction
  - Rebuttal
  - Outline your points of clash,
- Substantives
  - Point of Clash 1
  - Point of Clash 2
  - Point of Clash 3
- Conclusion
  - Summarise points of clash.

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## Summary Speakers

The summary speakers do pretty much the same job regardless of whether they're prop or opp.

### Things to do

- Rebut the key points made by the previous speaker.
- Identify the main points of clash in a debate, which are the key points the prop and opp have disagreed over. For example, the prop may have argued that progressive taxes are a good idea and the opp may have argued that they were a bad idea. That would be a point of clash.
- Generally you should identify 3, but if there have only been 1 or 2, only speak about those that have been brought up.

### Things to avoid

- Introducing new information.

## Some Style Hints

- Stand still
- Stand up straight. This will make you look more confident and keep your back healthy.
- Project your voice.
- Look at the audience and only glance at your notes when you absolutely need to.
- Take your time with your speech. Speaking too quickly makes it more difficult for the judges to keep track of what you're saying and it can also mean that you run out of things to say before your time is up.
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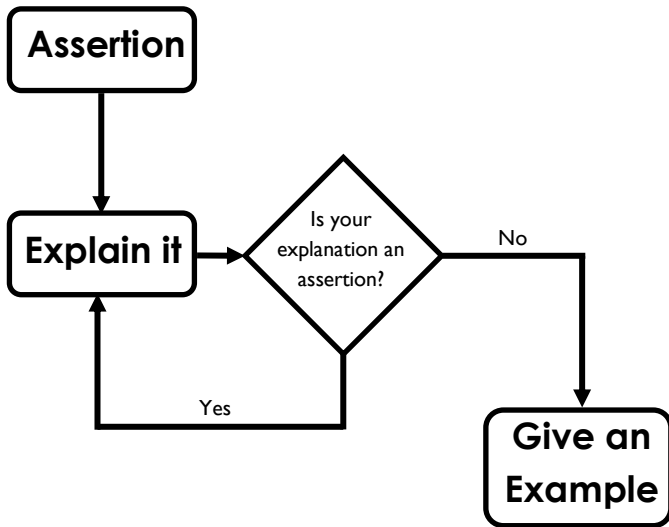
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When making a point, follow these steps:

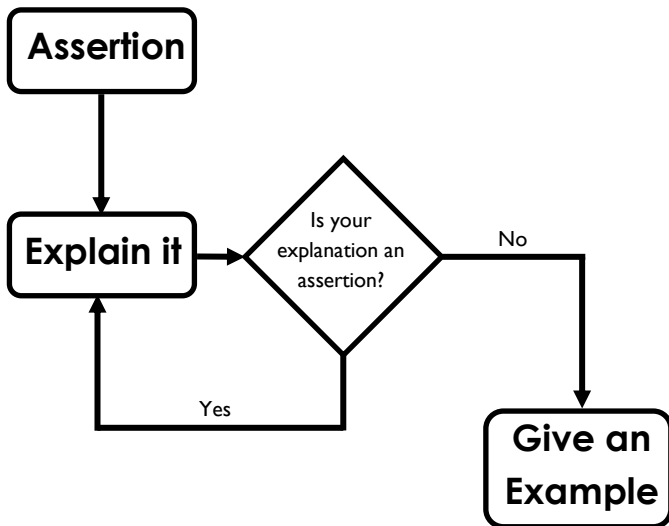


### Structure of a 3rd Opposition Speech

- Introduction
  - Rebuttal
  - Outline your substantives
- Substantives
  - Extension 1
  - Extension 2 (optional)
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- Conclusion
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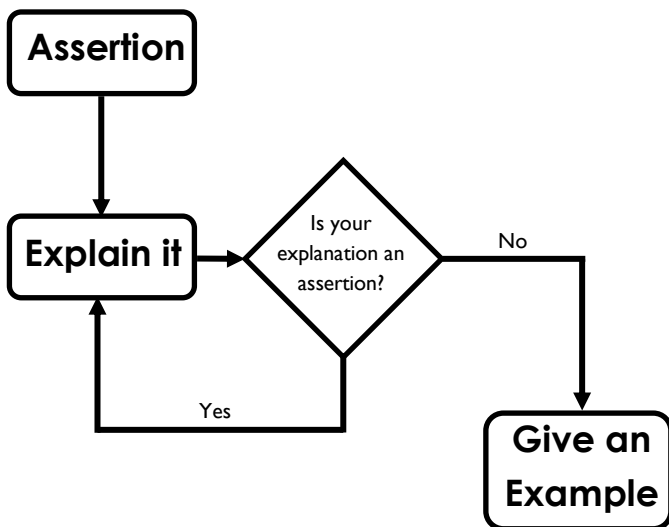


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### 3rd Opposition (extension speaker)

#### Things to do

- Rebut the key points made by 3rd Prop
- Extend the debate with some new ideas or examples. Generally these will be on a different slant to the first half of the table. E.g bringing up the example of Amsterdam in a drugs debate if that hadn't come up previously or talking about the purpose of education in a school age debate.
- A good extension speech generally has only one detailed substantive argument with several sub points within it (so don't forget to signpost). If you can't think of enough to argumentation to fill 5 minutes then don't worry. It's ok to have 2 or 3 points.
- A good opposition team will use the same extension points as the proposition, but use them to explain why the opposition is right.

#### Things to avoid

- Repeating the arguments made by the first half of the table. If they take all of yours, use the time you have before your speech to come up with some new ones.

### Types of Motion (This house would)

#### A "This house would" motion

In this motion, the 1st proposition is expected to give a mechanism. A mechanism explains what the house is going to do. Lets use this motion as an example:

"This house would ban alcohol"

This is very broad without a mechanism, because it could include alcohol used in fuel, cleaning, inks etc. so you would want to limit it to just alcoholic drinks, or alcoholic drinks over a certain percentage. You would also explain how the transition to an alcohol ban would take place and how the ban would be enforced.

Be careful not to make it too complicated though. If it's taking more than 30-45 seconds then it's probably too long. Remember, judges really want to hear why you're proposing the mechanism, not 5 minutes on what it is.

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## Types of Motion (This house believes)

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In this motion, there's no need to give a mechanism, and instead you're expected to argue on the principles of the motions. For example:

"This house believes that a referendum should be held on the Lisbon Treaty"

You wouldn't talk about the details of how you would hold a referendum, but instead talk about why you should hold referendums.

## Structure of a 3rd Proposition Speech

- Introduction
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- Substantives
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### 3rd Proposition (extension speaker)

#### Things to do

- Rebut the key points made by 2nd Opp.
- Extend the debate with some new ideas or examples. Generally these will be on a different slant to the first half of the table. E.g bringing up the example of Amsterdam in a drugs debate if that hadn't come up previously or talking about the purpose of education in a school age debate.
- A good extension speech generally has only one detailed substantive argument with several sub points within it (so don't forget to signpost). If you can't think of enough to argumentation to fill 5 minutes then don't worry. It's quite ok to have 2 or 3 extension points.

#### Things to avoid

- Repeating the arguments made by the first half of the table. If they take all of yours, use the time you have before your speech to come up with some new ones.

## Roles

15 minutes before the start of each debate (your preparation time) you will be given a role to fulfil. How well you fulfil that role is crucially important so you might like to refer this part of the booklet whenever you're preparing until they're all firmly engrained into your head,

### 3rd Proposition (extension speaker)

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## 1st Proposition

### Things to do

- Define the motion
- Create a mechanism if necessary (see types of motion)
- Explain what the problem with the status quo is.
- Give some reasons why the model (see glossary) is a good idea.

### Things to avoid

- Spending too long on the mechanism. (30-45 secs is plenty)
- Proposing the status quo or arguing a truism. Make sure you're changing something.
- Closing off the mechanism to make it impossible for the opposition to debate. It's ok to close off some avenues to the opposition, but you need to create a debate.
- Squirreling: This is defining the motion in such a way as to create a completely different debate to the more obvious interpretation of the debate.

## Structure of a 2nd Prop & Opp Speech

- Introduction
  - Rebuttal
  - Outline your 3 substantives.
- Substantives
  - Substantive 1
  - Substantive 2
  - Substantive 3
- Conclusion
  - Briefly sum up your substantives.

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## 2nd Proposition & Opposition

These positions are very similar and so don't really need explaining twice. I'm sure you can work out which of the options applies to you.

### Things to do

- Rebut the key arguments made by 1st Opp/2nd Prop.
- Expand upon the argument of 1st Prop/Opp. Good teams will often split the areas they are going to cover in half. E.g. In an environmental debate, the 1st speaker might talk about the environmental benefits of a proposal, and the 2nd speaker the economic benefits.

### Things to avoid

- Repeating the points made by 1st Prop/Opp.

## Structure of a 1st Prop Speech

- Introduction
  - Defining the motion and detailing a mechanism if necessary.
  - Explaining the Problem
  - Outline your 3 substantives.
- Your substantives
  - Substantive 1
  - Substantive 2
  - Substantive 3
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  - Briefly sum up the problem and your substantives.

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### 1st Opposition

#### Things to do

- Rebut the key arguments made by 1st prop.
- Defend the status quo by showing that;
  - Either there is no problem or;
  - That the argument doesn't solve the problem or;
  - That the side effects of the proposed solution outweigh the problem or;
  - Any combination of the above.
- Give some reasons why the above is better.

#### Things to avoid

- Spending too much time on rebuttal.
- Covering your partners points before they get a chance to.

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