What is Debate?

- Debate is a discussion involving opposing viewpoints
- **Formal debate**
  - Has rules governing the process and interactions
  - The beginning speeches in a debate are called "constructive speeches" stating your position
  - Evidence
  - Quotes and personal testimony
- **Informal debate**
  - Is a common occurrence
  - Structure is loose
  - Mistakes are easier to make
Your Objectives of Debate

• **Convince** others of your viewpoint
• **Present yourself** in a way that attract people to you and your cause
• Win people to your way of thinking
• **Be a leader**

Main Areas to Consider

• Clarity
• Evidence and facts
• Insinuations or fallacies
• Emotions
• Understand counter arguments
• Respect
• Presumptions

Components of Successful Debates

• Clearly explain your views
• Use evidence to support your viewpoint
• Be sure of your facts
• Control your emotions
• Do not use fallacy
• Do not insinuate
• Listen to the opponent
• Understand your opponents’ arguments
• Do not attribute ridiculous or malevolent ideas to your opponent
• Attain regression to the mean

Clarity

• **Focus on the topic at hand**
  – No stories, no blabbers
  – Avoid going in circles
  – Break down large topic into smaller logical units.
    • Dealing with smaller logical units make things simple to understand.
  – Avoids repetitions
  – Don’t magnify things even under extreme emotional state
  – Writing points down helps to put them in the right perspective
Clarity

• Examine your options
  — Have all the pros and cons of your options clearly defined in your mind
    • helps the mind to process faster
    • ensures that you are not leaving any detail out
  — Eliminate the weakest option and focus on the strong ones

• Chart out your thoughts.
  — Do not lose track of your logic
  — Make your logic available at a glance
    • Chart
    • Visuals
    • ... ...

• Focus on one thing at a time
  — It is easy to multitask and digress
  — Do one thing at a time
  — Take one idea at a time
  — When you are sure you are done, move to the next point.

• Practice
  — Bounce your ideas / thoughts at someone.
    • It clears your mind.
    • It helps improve your explanation skills

• Are you really confused?
  — Sometimes, it is you who is confusing yourself
    • Stop mind shatters
    • Relax and you will regain focus

Clarity

• Avoid confusing terms
  — terms that can be interpreted differently by different readers.
    • women freedom, moral values and uneducated

• Argue from authority
  — If you are not 100% confident in your knowledge, don’t debate
  — If you are not 100% confident of you communication capability, don’t debate
  — If you are not 100% sure of your control on your emotions, don’t debate
Evidence

- Quoting an authority is not evidence.
- Quoting a majority opinion is not evidence.
- Authorities and majorities can be wrong and frequently have been

Emotionalism

- **Avoid emotionally charged words**
  – Racial, ethnic, or religious hate words have no place in rational debating
- **Avoid personal attacks on your opponent**
  – It is an admission of intellectual bankruptcy.
- **Avoid slurs directed at groups with whom your opponent is identified**
  – Nonproductive and will backfire

Emotionalism

- Keep attention centered on the objective problem itself
  – Do not be sidetracked by opponents emotions
- **Make a general statement rather than pointing**
  – Instead of saying “you don’t know anything,” say, "a person adopting your viewpoint might be considered unfamiliar with the issue"

Fallacy

- Fallacy is erroneous beliefs
- **Avoid the popular fallacy**
  – Asian countries don’t respect democracy
  – Muslim women are oppressed by men
  – .... ....
**Insinuation**

- Insinuation is saying something negative about your opponent without coming right out and saying it
  - *Have you heard about your partner who stole the Medicare money*
- It could be difficult or impossible to defend against rational attack
- It can backfire

**Be sure of your facts**

- Don’t manufacture “facts”
- Know the source of your information
  - Newspapers or magazines often skew the information
  - TV shows and books can be biased
  - Anyone’s information can be wrong or inaccurate
  - Special interest groups are motivated to promote their views
- Check with more than one source
  - International publications gives a different perspective than your hometown newspaper
  - Academic work is often more reliable

**Understand Your Opponents' Arguments**

- Everyone thinks his position is the right one
- Listen to your opponent
  - You may discover some of the assumptions your opponents are making which will help you in the debate
- It is good practice to argue with a friend who take a position with which you do not agree

**Respect to Opponent and his Intelligence**

- There are all sorts of temptation to use subtleties to express hostility toward your opponent
- It is wise to treat your opponent with respect, even if he doesn’t deserve it.
  - If he doesn’t deserve respect, this will probably soon become obvious enough
Art of criticizing your opponent

• You can vividly and saliently present your criticisms of your opponent's beliefs or behavior.
• But avoid phrases that make him/her look ridiculous
  – “You are in line with your big Friend in the white house” is objectionable because it ridicules the president
  – Instead say “your argument is in line with the president’s”

Keep in Mind

• Refrain from saying “you are wrong”
  – You can say your idea is mistaken
• Attack the idea not the person
• Don’t disagree with the obvious truth
• Avoid exaggeration
  – Use many rather than most
  – Use some rather than many
  – Avoid the use of Never
  – Avoid the use of Always
  – The use of often allows for exceptions
  – The use of generally allows for exceptions

Keep in Mind

• Quote sources and numbers
• If it is just an opinion, admit it
  – Do not present opinion as facts
• Smile when disagreeing (not smirking)
• Stress the positive
• You do not need to win every battle to win the war
  – Concede minor or trivial points
• Avoid bickering, quarreling, and wrangling
• Watch your tone of voice
• Don’t win a debate and lose a friend
• Keep your perspective

Thank you for Listening