

MUN FORMAL DEBATE TIPS

Definition of Debating Terms

Chair: The Chairperson; the role is very important. It is their job to conduct the debate and to maintain order, while remaining totally impartial.

House: All members of the class/General Assembly/gathering, etc.

Submitter: The person who is proposing the motion in front of the form of a resolution/amendment for debate before the house.

Motion: The proposal for debate, which will eventually be voted upon.

Have the floor: To have been given the right to speak in debate.

Yield the floor: To give up one's right to the floor.

Order of the Day: This may be stated if the speaker goes off topic. This is stated as: "Is it an order for the delegate to speak about 'x' when the subject/topic being covered is 'y'?"

Point of Personal Privilege: A point stated when the audience is having difficulty understanding the speaker. This motion may interrupt the speaker if the speaker cannot be understood (s/he are speaking too softly, too loudly, too fast or not clearly). When interrupting the speaker to state a Point of Personal Privilege, do so politely loud and clear. The Chair will then recognize your Point and ask the speaker to speak louder, slower, etc.

Point of Information: This can only be stated after the speaker finishes speaking and the Chair asks for Points of Information. This point cannot interrupt the speaker at any time. A Point of Information should be stated in the form of a question, not a comment.

Point of Order: A question directed to the Chair by a member of the house who feels that a mistake has been made in the order of debate. It may not interrupt the speaker, and the country name card must be raised in order for recognition by the Chair.

Point of Parliamentary Inquiry: This is a point of information directed to the Chair regarding any of the rules of the Parliamentary Procedure. Delegates wishing to state a Point of Parliamentary Inquiry may not interrupt the speaker to do so. Eg. "Honourable Chair. Is it not an order for the speaker of the failed amendment to retain the floor at this time?" Again, this point can be a statement or question, depending on its context and phrasing.

General Rules During Formal Debate:

1. Decisions of the Chair are final. So, do NOT argue with the Chair. Ever. This is a bad idea because the Chair can remove you from the assembly.
2. Only the Chair, a member of the house recognized by the Chair for a point, or the speaker holding the floor has a right to speak.
3. All speakers, including those rising to points, must stand when speaking and address the Chair first (in order to obtain the floor).
4. The Chair may, if circumstances warrant it, extend or reduce debate times or speaking times and limit the number of points of information. The Chair may also suspend note passing.
5. Except by a decision of the Chair, there will be no suspension of the rules or changes in the order of debate.
6. Eating, drinking and laughing are all out of order.
7. Remember that you are debating in a formal manner. The use of slang and completely irrelevant contributions to debates will not be tolerated, and proper adherence to the rules of Parliamentary Procedure is expected
8. Always address the Chair and your fellow delegates with respect before you commence speaking. Before starting a speech, say something to the affect of, "Honourable Chair, fellow delegates," and then proceed with your statement.
9. Refrain from using personal pronouns when speaking. Remember never say "I". Always refer to yourself and others by the country being represented. If you feel the burning urge to use a pronoun, use "we." E.g. If you are answering a question about your country's opinion, you must say, "Australia feels that..." or "We feel that..." and not "I feel that..." because you are speaking for your country and not yourself.
10. If you have something to say (about the MUN) to the Chair or any other delegate, outside of debate, DO NOT SPEAK! Write a note. Note writing is the preferred form of communication in MUN.

During a formal debate in MUN, the following skills and tips must be considered in order to make it successful. Three of the familiar motions during a debate are categorized below, and skills and tips are listed below each category:

A. When you, the delegate, take the floor:

1. Be confident. Show the delegates that you know your topic well.
2. Maintain professionalism. The more professional you are the more serious people will take you.
3. Slow down when speaking. Project your voice and annunciate every word. If you sound confident and strong people will be willing to listen to you.
4. Don't read off a paper when speaking for or against a resolution. Have a few key points written down and then discuss the topic.

5. Be friendly. Thank the delegate for their question. Remember you are trying to make allies, not enemies.
6. Be positive and don't take criticisms personally.
7. If you are the main submitter of a resolution, try to be the last speaker in open debate. The final thing you want other delegates to hear is positive information about the resolution.
8. If you aren't sure how to answer the question, ask the Chair to have the delegate repeat the question. This allows you more time to think or understand the question.
9. Plan with other delegates to use the same key phrases over and over again: "this resolution will improve the living conditions or migrant workers", "this resolution is a violation of national sovereignty". Repeating the message will ensure that the other delegates know your main point.
10. When speaking, address the chair as "Honourable Chair" and delegates are "Honourable Delegates", or "Fellow/Honourable Delegate".
11. You are under no obligation to answer any questions at all. The Chair will ask if you are open to any "Points of Information", or questions after you have finished speaking. If you are not, just say so. However, it is advisable to be open to P.O.I., even more advisable to limit the number of questions. So, limit the number of questions to be asked by other delegates in order to keep delegates happy and to appear confident and firm in your country's opinion (whether you are or not).
12. If you want a certain country to support you and speak immediately after you, then ask the chair if you may lead the floor to that country. Unless there are time constraints, the chair will usually grant that request without hesitation. Keep in mind that the floor can only be yielded to another delegate ONCE. After Speaker #2 finishes, then the floor must be yielded back to the chair immediately.

B. When handed a resolution that you, the delegate, has never seen before you should ask these questions about each resolution and remember these tips:

1. Is this resolution realistic? Can it be done?
2. Does it have a strong clauses that actually solve something or is it just an "air" resolution? → One that sounds good but really says nothing.
3. What are the fundamental operations mechanisms for change? How does this resolution intend to change the status quo?
4. Does this resolution comply with the moral ideals of my country?
5. How will this resolution benefit my country should it pass?
6. Are there any new thoughts/ideas/approaches or is it just conventional?
7. Have these actions already been implemented?
8. Are there any actions that are in violation to the UN Charter?
9. Are there any specific clauses that support/violate your country's policies?
10. How can I help strengthen the wear parts of a country's actual position? What is the reality of the country's present actions?
11. What will the impact be on my country's national sovereignty?

12. Mark every clause, bad, or not sure. This will give you a game plan on what you want to point out, ask questions on, or what clauses to amend, or change. Analyze and point out the flaws or the benefits of every resolution.

C. When recognized to state a Point of Information, a question, by the chair:

1. After a delegate completes their speech, the chair will inquire whether the speaker is open to Points of Information. If the speaker is open to questions (and the speaker may or may not be), then you should raise your country's name card to ask a question. If your country is recognized, then you may rise and state your P.O.I. Address your question concisely to the delegate, and allow the speaker to answer. Do NOT engage in an argument or conversation with the speaker, whether you agree with the answer or not.
2. The only appropriate time to pose a P.O.I. is when the chair asks for them. Do NOT raise your country's name card before the chair asks, it is technically out of order. A P.O.I. is exactly that: **a** Point. No more than one question can be asked per Point of Information.
3. When stating a P.O.I. , the delegate to whom the point is directed to must be addressed with respect. An example: "Most honourable delegate of Japan...".
4. Make sure you make the best out of each question, as you only get a few.
5. Be as specific as possible when you ask a question. This will ensure that your point comes through clearly.
6. Try to phrase it in such a way that it can't be answered with a yes or no statement.
7. Listen carefully to other speeches so you don't repeat points already discussed.
8. Try to write your question down first. Work on the wording from your seat not when you are asking the question.
9. Pre-plan on what you want to do with the resolution (pass it or fail it) so that you can come up with constructive questions to prove your arguments.
10. Ask another delegation to ask a question for you if you have already been called on several times.
11. Immediately challenge the speaker if they state a fact without supporting it: "This resolution is vague." Ask: "Which clauses, specifically, are vague?" Why do you classify clauses 6 on line 45 as vague?"