

Guide to Speaking and Listening

This is an introductory guide to the basic rules and techniques needed for effective speaking and listening, based on materials used in the Middle School Public Debate Program.

Making an Argument	Example argument on the topic, "Ban Boxing!"
<p>Assertion: A statement that you're trying to prove with argument.</p>	<p>Boxing is <u>intended</u> to harm the participants.</p>
<p>Reasoning: The "because" part of your argument, offering support for your assertion.</p>	<p>Unlike other sports, in which physical collisions and body damage occurs, the point of boxing is to do harm to an opponent. The goal in boxing is the "knock-out" — unconsciousness that is the result of brain damage.</p>
<p>Evidence: Support for your reasoning, using contemporary or historical examples, statistical or scientific information.</p>	<p>And boxers succeed in doing a great deal of harm. Levander Johnson died from brain injuries; both Quarry brothers passed away before the age of 55 from a lifetime of beatings; Michael Watson is confined to a wheelchair; Gerald McClellan is in a coma, Muhammad Ali has Parkinson's disease from second impact syndrome. According to the Journal of Combat Sport, as many as 1,000 boxers may have died in the past century, with many thousands more seriously injured.</p>

4-Step Refutation	Sample Refutations
<p>Step 1: "They say..." Briefly restate the point you're about to answer.</p>	<p>Speaker 1: Bananas are better than oranges because they contain more potassium.</p>
<p>Step 2: "But..." Make your counter-assertion.</p>	<p>Speaker 2: Speaker 1 says that bananas are better than oranges, but oranges are better than bananas because they contain more vitamin C. Therefore, you should prefer oranges because while many foods in an ordinary diet contain potassium, few contain very much vitamin C.</p>
<p>Step 3: "Because..." Offer reasoning and evidence to support your counter-assertion.</p>	<p>OR</p>
<p>Step 4: "Therefore..." Conclude your point by comparing your point to the point you're answering.</p>	<p>Speaker 1: Junk food should be banned in schools.</p> <p>Speaker 2: Speaker 1 says that junk food should be banned in schools, but I disagree, because if we ban junk food in schools, children will just eat more junk food before and after school. Therefore, it's better to allow junk food in schools where we can regulate how much children eat.</p>

Listening and Note-taking	Researching For Debate and Discussion
<p>Listen carefully to all participants in a discussion or debate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cast a wide net. The first article you read may not be the best one. It's best to read a variety of opinions and sources to get the best information. • Make sure your sources are reliable. Try to find out who wrote the article you're reading, and what their qualifications are. If you don't know who wrote the article (was it a person? Organization?), then it's probably not reliable. Keep looking! • Explore both sides of an issue. Even if you're only looking for opinions and facts to support one side, it's useful to know what the other side is saying. • Keep a research journal. Take notes on the materials you consult, and keep copies of them if possible, so you can re-read materials and share your research with others.
<p>Take notes in multiple columns to track different points of view.</p>	
<p>Use abbreviations and symbols to make sure you're writing down as much as you can.</p>	

Be confident and have good information!