

DEBATE GUIDE: RESOURCE 6

Getting Debate Started: For Listeners

In debates, listeners are often in the position where they have to judge, evaluate, or provide feedback to help the debaters improve.

Take your job seriously, but do not use it as a chance to make it all about you. Set aside your own biases and evaluate the arguments in front of you, while showing that you care about hearing the arguments that they worked so hard to put together. Use this guide to get started on becoming a better listener. Note: These suggestions are intended as reminders and personal checkpoints rather than used as a formula. Feel free to skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

Clear Away Bias

- 1) When you hear a topic, recognize your immediate reactions and biases – call them out to yourself.
- 2) Recognize your biases towards the presenters and put them aside.
- 3) Put your mind in the mental state to learn something new. Remind yourself to think about the quality of the arguments.

Look Encouraging

- 1) In a learning setting, it is important to remember to create the conditions that help people learn. Trying to look intimidating makes it about you, as opposed to learning.
- 2) Occasionally look up in an encouraging way. You don't have to show you like every argument, just look open to hearing them.

Take Notes

- 1) Take organized notes that clearly follow the path of the debate and which arguments match up with one another. Use abbreviations.
- 2) Give non-verbal feedback that show your response to their points. If you like something, look like you like it, without being distracting. Don't look down the whole time.

Rely on Arguments Presented

- 1) Focus on evaluating the arguments as they are presented. Don't think about what you would have done, but base your evaluations on what they said.
- 2) Consider which points were carried throughout and whether they were explained with support. Who proved their arguments matter?

Review Content and Delivery

- 1) Separate your evaluation of the arguments from your response to their delivery. Which arguments were strong, even if the speaking style was weak or distracting?
- 2) When looking at delivery, think about which debaters were able to inspire the emotion that would compel you to act in their favor.

Justify Decisions

- 1) Make sure you can always explain your reason for deciding in favor of one debater over another.
- 2) When explaining your reasons, prioritize which reasons were especially central to your decision. Don't cover everything in the round and don't use it as a chance to prove your skill. Be constructive.

