

Heckling Hints

What is heckling?

Heckling is a brief one or two word comment that is used in parliamentary style debate. It is the short witticism that bursts the bubble of your opponent's grand speech, the type of comment you wish you could make to your teacher without them calling you on your "back-talk", a short form of the POI you just wish they would take. Well now here is your chance. A heckle is something short, on topic and to the point...a small jab at your opponents that you couldn't do elsewhere.

What heckling is not:

- Heckling is not a time to make a speech. Two or three words is more than enough.
- Heckling is not a prolonged exchange between debaters on opposite sides
- Heckling is not a replacement for POIs. You should still try to give two POIs during their constructive speeches. Heckling does not replace this, but is a chance for you to get one or two chances to make your side known in case the other team does not accept any more POIs.
- Heckling is not just "Hear hear" or "boo" or "source". Heckling is both an art and a skill, that like other parts of debate must be honed.
- Don't heckle your own partner or heckle the other side while your partner is speaking.

When you are heckled:

Your best source of action is to ignore the heckle. Do not get sucked into responding to a heckle or worse, altering your speech to respond to a heckle. Only reply to the heckle if you can come up with a comment that is just as witty as the original.

Finding examples of good heckles is next to impossible. Great heckles are born out of finding the perfect pun or witticism from the material your opponents have given you. Visit www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes_witticisms.htm and other web sites about jokes, puns, etc. for more examples of humour that might make great heckles:

1. I started out with nothing...I still have most of it.
2. If all is not lost, where is it?
3. If at first you do succeed, try not to look too astonished.
4. The first rule of holes: If you are in one, stop digging.
5. Nostalgia isn't what is used to be.
6. I wish the buck stopped here. I could use a few.
7. It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere.
8. An unbreakable toy is useful for breaking other toys.
9. It's not hard to meet expenses...they're everywhere.



Visit the following web sites for thoughts on heckling and tweeting in the House of Commons.

www.themarknews.com/articles/242-a-heckle-to-the-hecklers and

www.themarknews.com/articles/226-in-defence-of-heckling

blog.localdemocracy.org.uk/2009/10/26/does-twitter-damage-the-quality-of-parliamentary-debate-or-improve-it/