



SASKATCHEWAN ELOCUTION AND DEBATE ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION D'ELOCUTION ET DES DEBATS DE LA SASKATCHEWAN

# INTRODUCTION TO COACHING GUIDE

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## **SEDA**

The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA) is a non-profit organization that promotes speech and debate activities in English and French. The Association is active throughout the province from grade 6 through grade 12, and at the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. The Association co-ordinates an annual program of speech and debate tournaments and other special activities, including a model legislature.

SEDA's staff, along with printed and audio-visual materials, are available to assist any individual or group interested in elocution and debate. SEDA is a registered charitable organization. Charitable No. 11914 0077 RR0001.

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## **SEDA PATRONS**

- Honorary Patron - Hon. Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture, and Recreation
- Saskatchewan Law Foundation
- Celebrate Canada Committee for Saskatchewan
- Luther College High School
- Official Minority Language Office, Department of Education
- Mrs. Morris Shumiatcher
- Olivia Shumski

## **Affiliations**

- Canadian Student Debating Federation
- SaskCulture Inc.



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## *Introduction to Coaching*

### **Introduction**

All coaches need to know both the general policies and specific rules of debate, how to run a club and most importantly, how to have fun debating. As a novice coach in Saskatchewan, there are a number of good resources available to you. They include the office staff of the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA), SEDA's web site, other coaches as mentors, workshops, coaching certification, written guides, videos and compact disks. Different resources may be appropriate for your debate club depending on your location, membership and resources.

#### A. SEDA's staff

SEDA employs an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant/Program Co-ordinator who are responsible for the promotion of debate and speech in Saskatchewan. They can help you in a number of ways. They can put you in contact with other coaches in your area, and help you attend or run a tournament. They have information about workshops and coaching certification seminars. They can also set up local workshops free of charge. Feel free to contact the SEDA staff with any questions:

Phone 780-9243      Fax 781-6021      email [info@saskdebate.com](mailto:info@saskdebate.com)  
mail 1860 Lorne Street, Regina, SK S4P 2L7

#### B. SEDA's web site

SEDA's site is found at [www.saskdebate.com](http://www.saskdebate.com). It contains digital copies of all the print materials, invitations, scheduling and statistical information. SEDA recommends that new coaches pay particular attention to the **Resources** section.

#### C. Mentors

SEDA has coaches and clubs throughout the province, and these coaches function as a collegial group. If you call the SEDA office to request it, you can be connected with an experienced coach who will happily serve as your mentor in your first year. A mentor can help you understand tournament and qualification rules, as well as give you tips on facilitation of internal club activities.

#### D. Workshops

##### i) Novice debaters

SEDA's fall weekend workshop provides the best introductory activities for novice debaters. Debaters can choose sessions on any of SEDA's styles of debate as well as all of the basic components of debate that transcend particular styles. Debaters are given the opportunity to meet others throughout the province and to workshop the topic for the first round of competitive debate. Debaters also participate in a variety of practice debates with partners from other schools. Students leave the workshop with new friendships and a solid introduction to debate as a process.

Debaters may choose to attend the one-day workshop in the fall instead of the weekend workshop. One-day workshops give students a basic understanding of debate and provide them the opportunity to debate using the style and topic of the first round. These workshops are a good alternative if your club is unable to attend the full weekend workshop and are held in both the North and South regions of the province.

##### ii) Novice Coaches

SEDA's weekend workshop is also the best place for novice coaches to get the information and connections they will need to foster a successful first year. The workshop offers formal and informal sharing sessions, access to workshops on all styles of debate, and the introductory module of the coaching certification program. Coaches report that these sessions are very valuable.

### iii) Advanced Debaters

SEDA's weekend workshop also offers sessions for advanced debaters. In particular, sessions on advanced strategy, cross-examination lines of questioning and advanced speaking style are recommended. Check with the SEDA office regarding what sessions may be new this year.

One-day advanced workshops are offered periodically throughout the year, and are not offered concurrently with the one-day workshops for novice debaters. One-day workshops for advanced debaters focus on worlds style debate, refined speaking style, styles of clash and strategy. They are intended for senior students who will compete on the national stage. Contact the SEDA office for times, cost, or information on which debaters should attend these workshops.

Debate Camp is offered nationally at several different locations during the summer months. While it does offer novice training, costs are a factor and novice workshops are similar to those offered in the province. Students with particular interest may fund themselves to attend, and SEDA may fund some students in some years.

### iv) Advanced Coaches

SEDA offers coaching certification for coaches in conjunction with the weekend workshop in the fall and provincials. Additional modules are offered based on demand. In addition, SEDA funds advanced coaches who attend national events like the National Debate Seminar and Junior Nationals. Coaches are selected to participate in these events by SEDA's board of directors.

## E. Coaching Certification

### i) Module One

New coaches and coaches with 1 – 3 years experience must complete Module One. Module One introduces new coaches to the basic theory of debate and the rules of SEDA. Module One prepares new coaches to run a club and attend tournaments, and prepares more experienced coaches to host a tournament. Module One should also give coaches the confidence to attend the adult invitational tournament.

### ii) Module Two

Coaches who have completed Module One can progress to Module Two. Former debaters turned coach, or coaches with more than 3 years coaching experience may receive a pass on Module One but must attend Module Two. Coaches taking Module Two have run a club and hosted tournaments. Module Two builds on the knowledge needed to develop debaters and prepares coaches for inter-provincial or nationals events, as either a host or coach.

### iii) Module Three

Coaches may eventually complete Module Three. Primarily, Module Three prepares coaches to teach advanced debate skills. SEDA administration and partnership with SaskLotteries and SaskCulture are explained in depth. Completion of Module Three includes acting as an inter-provincial or nationals coach. Coaches who have received certification for Module Three are ready to provide training to other coaches in mentoring roles, and be a board member and officer, both provincially and nationally. Coaches who have completed Module Three are expected to recruit other coaches, provide for succession, spearhead the mentor program, and provide expertise at professional workshops and promotional opportunities.

SEDA offers coaching certification for coaches in conjunction with the weekend workshop in the fall and provincials. Additional modules are offered based on demand. Please see the coaching certification guidelines for further information, or contact the SEDA office.

## F. Guides, Compact Disks and Videos

SEDA provides the following informative guides, CDs and videos to assist you.

### i) Guides

Recommended guides include The “Step-by-Step” Guide to Debate, Research Packages, The Coaching Guide, Parts 1 & 2, The Tournament Host Guide, and The Guide to Judging. All these guides are available in PDF form on the web site, and the office will mail paper copies to member clubs free of charge. Non-member groups who would like to have copies mailed to them are charged a nominal fee.

### ii) Compact Disks

SEDA has a number of resources compiled on CD for easy access. They include some of the print guides, curricular links, activities for your club to do to practice skills, lessons plans and more. Contact the SEDA office for more information.

### iii) Videos

SEDA has a number of demonstration debates in different styles and a how-to-judge video available for Purchase or loan. Members and non-members may borrow any video from the SEDA office for as long as needed. All videos must be returned by the end of the school year. SEDA recommends the purchase of videos for school libraries.

## II. Administration

### A. The Office

SEDA employs an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant/Program Co-ordinator. The office is located at 1860 Lorne St. in downtown Regina in the Administration Centre for Sport, Culture and Recreation, an office building occupied primarily by beneficiaries of the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.

### B. The Board

SEDA is governed by a volunteer board which, for the most part, is elected by the membership. The board consists of up to eleven people and includes a past-president, eight elected directors and two directors who are appointed by the board. The appointed directors are alumni representatives, one for the north, the other for the south.

Directors serve for two years and are elected at the annual general meeting (AGM). The AGM is held in conjunction with the provincial debate tournament, usually held in March. Each year, five positions (four elected and one appointed) on the board expire. If you are interested in running for one of the four elected positions, you need to be nominated by another SEDA member. After the election, the board members elect a President and a Vice-President then they appoint a Treasurer and the alumni reps.

### C. Membership

A membership in good standing is required for clubs to participate in all SEDA events except workshops and the Round I tournaments. Being a member entitles your club representative to speak at the AGM, run for the board, and receive the newsletter, events schedule, and annual report. Contact the SEDA office for membership rates. First year clubs receive a 25% discount. With membership, clubs may compete at events where suitable categories of competition exist and receive resources free of charge.

Please note SEDA requires that all clubs must designate at least one coach who shall:

- i) be at least 18 years of age;
- ii) be responsible for the behaviour of participants less than 18 years old at SEDA-sanctioned events;
- iii) be responsible for communication between SEDA and the club;
- iv) in the case of school-based clubs, be a teacher.

#### D. Changes to the Rules

SEDA's members have the power to change the Constitution and Bylaws. The procedure is as follows:

##### i) Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the Constitution of the Association shall require approval by two-thirds of the members at a duly-called general meeting for which fourteen days written notice specifying the proposed amendment(s) has been given.

##### ii) Policy

Policy may be passed, rescinded, or altered by an "extraordinary resolution" passed by one-half of the Institutional members at a duly-called general meeting for which fourteen days written notice specifying the proposed extraordinary resolution(s) has been given.

Therefore, proposed changes to the Constitution or Bylaws must be circulated to all members fourteen days prior to the Annual General Meeting.

#### E. Regions

For purposes of competition and selection for out-of-province events, the province is divided into four regions:

- North Rural
- Saskatoon
- South Rural
- Regina

The boundary between the North and South Rural Regions is a line bisecting the province that runs (approximately) through Canora. For the purpose of competition, the province shall be considered one region for French language or Bilingual activities.

#### F. Affiliations

SEDA pays membership fees to the following groups:

- Canadian Student Debating Federation: The CSDF is the national organization that annually sponsors the weeklong National Student Debating Seminar.
- SaskCulture: As a Provincial Cultural Organization (PCO) SEDA receives the bulk of its funding from the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation and is required to thank and promote the Lotteries at all events.

#### G. News and Communications

SEDA publishes a newsletter, *Voice*, reporting on recent SEDA events. Information about SEDA activities, scheduling, event results and rule changes is also distributed via fax and email memos and special bulletins throughout the year. However, the best source of current information is SEDA's web site, located at [www.saskdebate.com](http://www.saskdebate.com). SEDA encourages the use of email and the web site as much as possible for quick communication between staff and members.

### III. Activities and Competitions

#### A. Debate Tournaments

SEDA holds four rounds of regular-season debate tournaments through the year. A round of debate could involve as many as four separate debate tournaments in order to accommodate all the regions and categories of debate. Debate tournaments are one-day affairs, consisting of three to four rounds. These oblige the debater to prepare and debate both sides of a topic. The topics or resolutions are announced for all tournaments in the fall. SEDA prepares research packages for most resolutions and distributes them to

the debate clubs. This research is most beneficial to novice debaters and debaters in remote areas of the province.

SEDA also co-sponsors a number of tournaments for high school debaters and coaches. Senior debaters can practice their parliamentary impromptu debate at the annual Pro-Am, which is typically hosted by the University of Saskatchewan Debate Society in the spring. High school debaters are paired with university debaters. For coaches, SEDA hosts the annual Adult Invitational. SEDA debaters act as judges and speakers while their coaches and other adults debate in parliamentary impromptu style. Both events do not require adult participants to be SEDA members.

i) Categories of Competition

Div. III Jr.	For students in grades 6, 7 and 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
Div. III Sr.	For students in grade 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Cross-examination</li> </ul>
Div. IV Novice	For students in Gr. 10 or 1st year of Div. IV debate regardless of grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-examination</li> <li>• Parliamentary</li> </ul>
Div. IV Open	For students after one year of Div. IV debate or exceptional strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-examination</li> <li>• Parliamentary</li> </ul>
French Senior	For students in grades 9 to 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-examination</li> <li>• Parliamentary</li> </ul>
Bilingual	For students in grades 9 to 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-examination</li> </ul>

B. Speech Tournament

The speech rounds are held in conjunction with the first two regular rounds of debate. All Senior debaters give short impromptu speeches at Round I and both Junior and Senior debaters must give a short impromptu speech at Round II. SEDA then selects, based on the best of their two speeches, the top Senior participants in each the north and south regions to move on to the National Speech Competition in Winnipeg.

C. E.C. Leslie Provincial Debate Tournament

Held every March, this event determines the provincial champions in each category. This event is also the final step in selecting delegates for Debate Camp, the Junior Debate Nationals, National Championships and the National Student Debating Seminar. *Debaters must have participated in a minimum of two tournaments with the same partner to be considered for the eligibility list.*

D. Historical Model Legislature

This annual two-day event, usually held in the Saskatchewan Legislature, is open to all high-school students. Students debate actual bills from specific periods in Saskatchewan history and are encouraged to dress in the style of the era to add to the authenticity and fun. Prizes are awarded for Top Parliamentarians and Best Costumes.

E. Regional and National Events

Debaters have the opportunity to advance to the Western Seminar, the Senior National High School Championships, Speech Nationals, Junior Nationals, the National Seminar and Debate Camp. Please see the handout "*Debate Opportunities*" for an overview.

The selection of SEDA delegates to all regional and most national events is based on the following principle - the top student in each region who has not previously attended the event is selected. This means that if the first and second best debaters in the province are in the same region, the second best debater in the province will not attend. Conversely, if the best student in a given region is the sixteenth best in the province, that student will attend. See [SEDA's Constitution and Policy Manual](#) for details.

The purpose of SEDA is to promote debate and its benefits as widely as possible. The concept of regional representation ensures that debate will continue to thrive in all parts of Saskatchewan, not only in the regions with high levels of participation. Similarly, the C.S.D.F. also encourages regional representation by requiring that delegations to the National Student Debating Seminar be selected by means of a system designed to achieve the widest possible regional representation.

The only exceptions to this rule are debate camp and the National Championships. These activities are funded by the province of Saskatchewan to promote excellence in debate. To that end, the participants with the highest averages are selected. See [SEDA's Constitution and Policy Manual](#) for details.

#### **IV. Types of Debate**

SEDA focus on three style of debate: discussion, cross-examination and parliamentary. The majority of SEDA's debates are policy debates (meaning they require a plan). Topics are introduced at the start of the year and rounds are prepared for in advance. However, there is one round of debate which is an exception.

Round Three is a values debate. Debaters merely debate the principal and no plan is required. Some rounds of debate at this third tournament are also impromptu, meaning the debaters have a short amount of time to prepare for the topic they will debate.

For details on rules of each style, conventions and structure, please see SEDA's [Step-by-step Guide to Debate](#).

#### **V. Hosting a Tournament**

A debate program is the sum of its tournaments. If clubs expect to go to tournaments, then coaches need to host them. SEDA has a [Debate Tournament Hosting Guide](#) to help to plan tournaments; as well, the office staff will be pleased to assist and advise coaches in planning and running tournaments. SEDA provides tournament hosts a cash subsidy of \$100 for one category of debate and \$75 for each additional category up to a maximum of \$400. All ballots, scripts, score sheets, judges briefing guides, and certificates are also supplied.

#### **VI. Coaching a Club**

##### **A. Fall recruiting**

In most schools, fall activities are promoted in September. Use newsletters, announcements, poster, club days and recruitment activities to draw students. If you have an established club, students can do demonstration debates on a fun topic in a set room over lunch hour, so other students can see what debate is about.

Handpicking likely candidates is often the most successful approach. When starting a club, begin with students who are likely to be successful debaters. While many different types of students can be great debaters, it is good to begin a new club with students who are intelligent, like to argue and have a good work ethic. The key trait is a willingness to research and explore ideas, as these skills lead to a sustained interest in debate. As these students enjoy debate, they will naturally help you recruit others who would enjoy debate. Dialectic activities like essays, speeches, or debates in the classroom are an excellent way to ferret out likely candidates.

Be sure to highlight potential opportunities for students who get involved. Highlight the retreat nature of the weekend workshop and the friends they'll make. Note some of the great destinations of national events and the travel opportunities debate offers. Students involved in Model United Nations or student government may be particularly interested in actually conducting activities in the Legislature in Regina.

Debate clubs are typically slow to start. If you have 6 students in the first year of a club, that makes an excellent year. Only two students is enough for a debate team, and many established clubs have 10 members. The moderate pace that debate clubs grow at is really important, because it allows the coach to acclimatize to all the elements of debate gradually. However, if a new club does find itself with more than 10 members, it is very helpful to have two coaches, or for the new coach to have a formal mentor from another school.

## B. Meeting

When setting a meeting time, be aware of potential conflicting activities. Many debaters are active members of the school community, and selecting the meeting time that the most people can attend is helpful. If there is more than one coach or the club is larger, consider multiple times – one for the group as a whole and some specialized times for working on specific skills or styles of debate.

Coaches run meetings in a variety of ways. At minimum, the function of a debate club meeting is to exchange information. Many coaches issue “debate binders” to keep members organized. Tournament registration may be gathered or times and dates exchanged. Memos for parents are distributed. All debate clubs do these activities. As the club progresses, however, it will likely move through a number of other activities. These are the substance of coaching and the main focus of both the meetings and the other activities of the club.

### i) Managing Club membership and books

In Module One of the coaching certification, coaches are provided with clear explanations of how to track both debaters and finances. Since being eligible for provincials is team, and not individually determined, **coaches are strongly encouraged to ensure that each debater debates in at least two tournaments with the same partner in the category that the debater will debate in at Provincials.** It is up to the coach to determine the team pairings. Some may be happy starting with a friend. Some teams form to balance out each other's strengths – a logical debater paired with an emotional speaker or to form a powerhouse team. Personality conflicts may arise that a coach will have to deal with.

By tracking each debater, coaches can also track who has paid. Different clubs have different methods of finance. In some clubs, fundraising pays for tournaments, while in others, debaters pay their own costs. Some clubs may charge a membership fee beyond those set by SEDA to help cover costs. These decisions are all made at the discretion of the coach. Hosting a tournament also generally makes money for the host club. Regardless of the style of money generation, it is best to ensure that debaters have paid before registering them for a tournament. Unless a team is cancelled at least a week in advance, the club is liable for the cost of teams that cancel, and last minute cancellations are a major inconvenience for a tournament host. Since debaters who have paid in advance are less likely to cancel at the last minute, and your club will not be left paying, pre-payment is the best policy.

SEDA does not request a financial accounting from each club, however such information is always helpful to the administration of the programs. If your club maintains any expense/revenue yearend reports please feel free to forward them to the SEDA office.

As soon as the invitation to a tournament is received, a meeting should be called and teams should be given a written breakdown of cost including transportation. Students often need to complete a SEDA liability form or media consent form. The coach will need to complete the registration form and send it to

either the coach who is hosting the tournament or the SEDA office, depending on what is specified on the form. Additional copies of forms are usually available from SEDA's web site.

ii) Working on a resolution

As soon as the club starts working on a resolution or topic for a debate tournament, teams should check the SEDA website to see if there is an available research package. In addition, you may choose to supplement this package with additional information on the topic. Since packages are prepared well in advance, they often omit the most current information.

Coaches should start working a resolution by skimming the package and highlighting key ideas or terms. Once a coach has determined the basic concepts and terms the debaters need to be aware of, the club should discuss them. When everyone has a good handle on the topic and the key issues of the debate have been discussed, it is time to begin building cases. By this point, debaters need to have read the research package. Distribute or discuss the Why do I read the package and further info and How to read a piece quickly and effectively handout.

Working out definitions is difficult. Definitions need to be open enough to make the resolution debatable, but not so general that the topic is unlimited. Start the process by deciding what the Affirmative will argue in most cases and then what the debaters in the club wish to argue. Then define the important words to frame the resolution around the key ideas. Double-check the definitions to be sure that they are fair and not dependent on themselves to be true. Bad definitions cause debates about definitions, not the issues. These debates are boring and hurt every debater's speaker average. They should be avoided.

Inexperienced or Division Three debaters will need help in preparing their actual cases. On the Affirmative they will need help generating needs for change and a plan. On the Negative, they will need help constructing arguments for why the status quo is good. Regardless of experience, most debaters run their cases by their coaches for approval. This is a good practice, and helps to prevent doomed or bizarre cases.

Once these tasks are done, the basics of preparing for a tournament are complete. However, going beyond the minimum creates a much stronger club. Many coaches have practice debates before the tournament. This is a strong practice because it forces debaters to prepare sooner, and gives them practice with the resolution. Taping the practice may be a useful tool. If the debaters will be trying a new style of debate, a practice debate also reduces nervousness and increases comfort with the new rules. In addition to practicing for a specific resolution, coaches can also teach skills, style, specific technique and good speaking habits. For information on these things, please see the **Part 2 Advanced Coaching Guide**.

C. Registering for club membership and events

i) Membership

All clubs must be registered by October 31 to participate in future events. Clubs may be denied attendance if membership fees are not paid. The membership forms request the names, grade, experience level and category of each student.

SEDA also requires one media release per club member be submitted with the registration. This form only needs to be submitted once per year/per student. This release is very important so SEDA may publish photos of debaters in *Voice*, on the web site and in other publications. Liability forms are required for events hosted directly by SEDA. Liability forms are not required by the SEDA office for the four rounds of tournaments.

Clubs are requested to update their membership list as their club membership changes. This helps the office ensure that all debaters are in the correct category and remain eligible for future events like Provincials.

Debaters must compete with the same partner in at least two tournaments and in the same category to be considered for Provincials eligibility.

#### ii) Events

Generally, SEDA or the hosts will release the invitations about one month prior to the event. Invitations may be sent via mail, fax or email. All invitations are posted on the web site and can be downloaded as needed. Registration forms can be faxed or mailed to the SEDA office unless otherwise indicated. Emailed registrations are also encouraged. Teams are registered on a first-come basis up to the host's team limit. Clubs registering after the deadline will be placed at the bottom of the wait list if the limit has been reached.

Tournament fees are paid directly to the host school, usually upon arriving at the event. Pre-payment is gladly accepted! Cheques are to be made out to the hosts, but can be sent to SEDA along with the forms. Workshop, Provincials and Model Legislature fees are paid directly to SEDA. Clubs will be expected to pay for any cancelled teams.

Debaters selected to compete at regional and national events may be required to pay a portion of the registration fees. SEDA generally pays the travel costs and the rest of the registration fees.

#### D) Transportation to events

Clubs are responsible for arranging all their own transportation and chaperons to events. If various coaches take the initiative, clubs often share transportation costs of rental buses or vans. Parents and other spectators are always welcome. Unlike sporting events, there is usually no concession. Spectators are required to pay a small lunch ticket fee if they wish to have the meal. Arrangements should be made ahead of time with hosts if this is the case.

#### E. Coaching during a tournament

Some debaters will want you to watch, others won't. Let them be your guide. You will need to be there to share their triumphs and soothe them in their defeats. Always be constructive with your comments.

Assist debaters if they need to register a conflict of interest concern about a judge and ensure everyone follows the *Code of Conduct*. Please see the [SEDA Constitution and Policy Manual](#) for details.

Coaches are allowed to assist the debaters right up until the debate starts, but must never write the material. During impromptu and speech events, coaches must not directly prepare an individual's presentation. This is a tough line to draw. Prompting questions and leading a brainstorming session are okay; providing direct information to be used in a speech is not. For example, a coach may ask: what do you know about this topic, what do you think, etc. The best course of action may be to let the students work amongst themselves. This avoids even the appearance of inappropriate coaching at this time.

#### F. Post tournament debriefings

Once a tournament is completed, clubs should spend a meeting discussing how the tournament went. All debaters experience issues with judging or other teams being overly competitive. Discourage your debaters from focusing on these issues, as your club does not have the resources to solve them. Instead, focus on areas where debaters have experienced success and dissect why they did. You can also focus on particular problems related to the style of debate or the styles used by opposing debaters. Use the process to help debaters learn that reflection about debate is one of the most powerful tools they have to help them improve.

#### G. Building self-confidence

Coaches can help students develop confidence and self-esteem. Here are some ways you can do it. Remember:

- Greet each person individually when they arrive for each session. Make them feel good about being there.
- Show confidence in their ability to learn.
- Offer activities that suit their level of development.
- Encourage effort without always focusing on results.
- Avoid elimination games and other activities that may add undue pressure. Create situations where there are lots of "successes".
- Be specific when telling them what you like about their effort or performance.
- Use a smile, a nod, or a wink to acknowledge them.
- Praise them for special things they have done. A pat on the back means a lot.
- Give them responsibilities. Involve them in making decisions and give each of them a chance to be a leader. You might want to alternate captains, for example.
- Ask them for their input and invite their questions.

*Source: Getting Started in Coaching, 3M Coaching Series.*

### How Should I Coach Debaters for a Particular Debate?

(from A Debate Coach's Guide, by Colin Castle)

You will hear conflicting advice on this point, but you can resolve the conflict by asking another question: why are the debaters entering the tournament? Because...they want to, of course, and because we, as educators, want them to. Debating is education. It helps students to develop personally, to discover that they can do things that other people cannot. It builds self-esteem, cleans up speech, and forces students to think precisely and quickly. We could go on, but the point is made. In debating, as in mathematics, music, or mechanics, we are educating students. Math teachers never write students' tests for them - they leave that to the student. So the debate coach keeps his or her distance, too. It is a disservice to the students to "do it for them." So, I would suggest this procedure:

- a) A tournament invitation is received. Call a meeting of all those interested in taking part.
- b) Establish the teams. Complete the registration form and mail it or fax it. Generally, registrations are accepted on a first come, first served basis and must also include payment of the registration fee to be accepted.
- c) Hold a brainstorming session on the resolution and on its possible interpretations and definitions. Encourage the debaters to dredge up every possible argument, with or without justification, on both sides of the resolution. Assist by recording ideas on the board or the overhead. You can also enter into the brainstorming, but take care not to dominate it. Encourage the debaters to make their own record of as much material as they want.
- d) Discuss profitable lines of research: "What about finding out how many road accidents happen each year in the U.S.A. and Canada?" Indicate possible sources: "Canada Yearbook, Quick Canadian Facts, Information Please Almanac will be useful - all in the school library."
- e) Keep them on their toes before you have arranged to see them next. When you see debaters in the hall ask, "How are you getting along with that affirmative case? What definition did you decide to use?"
- f) Before the tournament listen to each team debate another, preferably twice and taking opposite sides of the resolution. You will not need to criticize logic inconsistencies or weaknesses in either case - each team will discover these when they face their "in-house" opposition. But you can chip away at style, rules, delivery, structure of speeches, missed opportunities, and so on. With inexperienced debaters, you might find, to your amazement, that they all missed the point of the resolution, and are chatting happily about details. Shine a big light for them. Show them the way. But don't do it for them. And choke off those parents; there are many a Mom or Dad living vicariously in debating.
- g) Ease off before the tournament. Do not pressure debaters at the last minute. They have either done what they need to do or they have not - it's too late to do much about it. Besides, they are probably more interested in what they are going to wear, and what shopping there is in Tootletown.

- h) And when you return to school, after it's all over, hold a post-mortem. Help your debaters benefit from their experiences. Discuss the strong and weak points of their recent oppositions. Ask them what comments they received from judges. It adds up to a better performance next time.

### What Should Be the Goal of My Coaching?

You should encourage your students in these directions:

- a) regarding debate subject matter, to achieve an overview; details find their place later.
- b) to be flexible in their response to an opponent's arguments; to ensure that their constructive speeches are replies - a debate should be a logical conversation in four parts.
- c) to despise tactics which involve the falsification of facts or a deliberate misquotation of an opponent.
- d) to be modest; success in debating, like nuclear physics, can release huge amounts of potential energy; bombastic debaters are the bane of organizers' lives. Let us have tournaments without mushroom clouds.

## **VII. The Seven Musts**

It boils down to the SEVEN MUSTS:

- Must #1      Be responsible. If you enter three teams, arrive with three teams. If you are to bring three judges, bring three of them. If you have to cancel a team, do it as soon as you know. Turning up a team short is unforgivable.
- Must #2      Be on time. This applies to both the registration deadline and the tournament itself.
- If the tournament host does not receive your registration with payment before the deadline, you may not be admitted to the tournament. Registering early is the best advice. Tournaments can accommodate only a certain number of teams and, depending on the number of registrants, simply meeting the deadline may not be enough.
- If you know you are going to be unavoidably delayed en route, call ahead to warn the host so decisions can be made about how to proceed. Consequences range from forfeiting the first round of debate to being disqualified from the entire tournament.
- Must #3      Pay up. Registration fees have to be collected before lunch can be paid for.
- Must #4      Volunteer. Offer to judge, to fetch lunch, to shovel snow, to unlock the girls' washroom, etc. Tournament organizers have a right to ask for these and more.
- Must #5      Control your debaters. Most debaters need no 'control,' but we can think of some who do. You are responsible for your debaters' manner, punctuality, and appearance.
- Must #6      Supervise your students. You must supervise your debaters at all times or make arrangements for them to be supervised.
- Must #7      Have a sense of humour.

### **VIII. Things To Avoid?**

Are there some things which are just not done by debate coaches? Yes, there are. We might call them the THREE GREAT NO-NOs:

- No-No #1 Debate coaches do not scout other teams during tournaments. It goes without saying, of course, that they never ‘assist’ debaters by listening to the arguments presented by teams to be met later in the day. It’s been done! Coaches and debaters must be familiar with all the rules.
- No-No #2 Debate coaches do not complain. Okay, so your team ran up against a miserable judge with a hangover. It’s the breaks. Next time they will win. Talk to the SEDA staff or host immediately if a serious breach has occurred.
- No-No #3 Debate coaches NEVER intervene in any way during a debate. While watching your debaters in action, your lips are sealed and your display of emotion is colder than the Sphinx. Any intervention on your part risks the disqualification of your debaters. To dispute matters with a judge, whether during the judge’s comments or outside the room, is almost as reprehensible. However, if no one in the room has any idea about debate procedure and the debate has ground to a halt, some ‘traffic’ directions on your part would probably be appreciated by everyone. By the same token, if the audience is blatantly unruly, a request for order, first directed to the chairperson, and if necessary the audience at a suitable break in the debate, is probably in order.

### **IX. Developing a philosophy for Advanced Coaching**

Most debate coaches become coaches because the exchange of ideas fascinates them. They are often teachers, parents or lawyers. As each coach enters debate, the focus tends to be on the details. What are the rule violations? How does my team qualify for a tournament? While the details are important, they are less important than the reason why we debate. A debate can exist with only two people in any space. All that is needed is a topic that supports diverse views and two or more people willing to discuss the views. As coaches, we need to focus on why debate draws us, and then build activities in our own clubs that nurture our own philosophies.

Once the “why” is chosen, then a coach starts to develop the “how”. Running a debate club needs to consider the why with each how.

For example, when a coach starts the coaching year as a coach focused on values, moral certitude and thoughts, she might start with a difficult moral question and ask the debaters to decide what the right choice is. As the club works through the informal debate, the debaters get an introduction to things the coach values most. A coach who values the second concept, the expression of ideas, might start the first practice by walking at the front of the room in a variety of ways and get the students to make generalities based on the walking style. He is also focusing his students on the things he values.