

# Debate Checklist

By Zoe

- Research.** In order to communicate effectively, it's imperative to know the facts. Do your homework. Read up on the topic. Highlight quotes from your research as an easy reference during this process. Study and understand both sides of the argument. Look at it from different angles. Collect evidence to support all views on the topic.
- Picking sides.** While it helps to see a point from all sides, you must pick one side to argue. You may not even agree with this side. However, articulating ideas in a passionate way and with conviction from a perspective you don't personally agree with is great practice for future endeavors. It's about committing and following through. If you show signs of doubt, it will be difficult to win your argument.
- Create your debate.** Whether your debate is written or oral, this process will help put things into perspective. Organize your thoughts using this formula:
  - Introduction.** Keep your introduction succinct.
  - Evidence.** Pick four to six of your strongest pieces of evidence in advance.
  - Conclusion.** Repeat your thesis in the conclusion and point out ways in which you have disproved the opponent's point of view.
- Practice.** It's natural to be nervous, but the more you practice out loud with friends, roommates, family members, or even alone in front of a mirror, the easier it will be for you to appear calm, cool and collected. Confidence will help you win.
- Presentation.**
  - Wear appropriate attire.** You will be taken more seriously. If this is for a school debate, you may be given a dress code.
  - Stand up straight with your shoulders back.**
  - Breathe deeply.**
  - Make eye contact with the people around you, but shift your gaze.**
  - Reference your notes, but don't read from them.**
  - Bring a pen and a separate piece of paper for rebuttal notes.** Speak clearly and concisely at a volume where everyone can hear you.
  - Do not yell or whisper.**
  - Articulate your words.**
  - Talk at a pace that gives you enough time to get your thoughts out.** Don't speak too slow or you'll lose the audience's attention.
  - Vary your tone to make it interesting.**
  - Keep your vocabulary simple.** You will sound more intelligent.
- Passion.** Don't be afraid to convey passion when you speak. It will make your argument more compelling and interesting. Passion is a valuable tool in a debate. For example, people feel strongly whether they are for or against the legalization of marijuana, or abortion. Tap into that passion, but remember to stay level headed.

- Rebuttal.** You'll be making mental or physical notes as the other side presents their case. Chances are, you'll want to rebut some of the opposing arguments. You won't have time to rebut them all. If you nitpick every argument, you'll water down your own perspective. Be selective.