



# GREAT COMMUNICATOR

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## DEBATE SERIES



# EDUCATION

## THE MISSION

The Ronald Reagan Great Communicator Debate Series is designed to cultivate engaged, informed, and conscientious citizen leaders by hosting a national series of high school debates. This nonpartisan debate series will culminate in a National Championship, hosted on-site at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

The National Championship promotes civic engagement, spotlights the nation's most promising high school communicators, and showcases the legacy of President Reagan as both "The Great Communicator" and a renowned debater. Engaging in civil discourse is a hallmark of American democracy, and this debate series encourages young citizens to join the conversation on issues facing our country.

## ELIGIBILITY

1. Any student, in grades 9-12, who is a legal resident of the United States and is enrolled in an accredited U.S. high school, home school, or home study program is eligible to compete.
2. Competitors are allowed to compete in one geographic qualifying competition and/or the online competition.
3. Each student at the qualifying competition must be under the immediate supervision of an adult who may be their coach, parent, or other adult approved by their high school.
4. Each qualifying host may establish entry fees for their competitions, in accordance with the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute.
5. A contestant who does not appear at the scheduled time to speak will forfeit.
6. Each qualifier for the National Championship and one chaperone will receive an all-expenses paid trip to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California.

For a full list of rules, visit the Great Communicator Debate Series webpage.

*\*Rules are subject to change up until one week prior to the first qualifying competition.*

## DEBATE STRUCTURE

The structure of this debate series reflects that of a presidential debate to promote the use of creativity, civility, and a direct discussion of ideas between competitors. Unlike most other debate styles, judges are allowed to ask questions as if they were a moderator. Much like President Reagan, competitors should present their ideas with a variety of techniques, including elements of evidence, story-telling, and charisma.

<b>STRUCTURE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Affirmative Opening Statement	5 minutes
Negative Opening Statement	5 minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Negative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Crossfire	3 minutes
Moderator Questioning	3 minutes
Affirmative Closing Statement	3 minutes
Negative Closing Statement	3 minutes
Prep Time *	2 minutes
Ballot Decision & Written Comments	4 minutes
<b>TOTAL DEBATE TIME</b>	30-40 minutes

\*Debaters may use prep time throughout the round at their discretion.

## OPENING STATEMENT

5 minutes

### Purpose

The opening statement is your chance to introduce your case to the judge(s). You should provide a clear understanding of the big picture argument you want to present. This can be done using evidence, anecdotes, and/or figurative language. Find the balance of evidence and storytelling that works best for you and your arguments. You should avoid using debate language like “contention” or “solvency”; this debate is focused on how well you convey and defend your ideas, not how well you know debate theory and terminology.

### Crafting A Strong Opening

- Present a clear main argument:  
What should the judge(s) take away from your speech?
- Use solid logic and reasoning to support your arguments/evidence
- Balance evidence with storytelling
- Use language that can be understood by a non-debater
- Have a refined and charismatic presentation that will have the judge(s) wanting to hear more

## REBUTTAL ARGUMENT

4 minutes

### Purpose

Your rebuttal argument is the time to counter your opponent’s arguments and rebuild your own case. Do not restate your original arguments here; use new evidence and unique arguments to counter your opponent. The rebuttal lets you show the judge(s) your ability to think on the spot and find clever and memorable ways to strengthen your own case. Unlike traditional debates, do not “go down the flow” (i.e. respond to each argument one by one in order). Weave your arguments into the overall story of your debate in a way that is easy to follow and covers all relevant points.

### Delivering A Strong Rebuttal

- Respond to major arguments made by your opponent
- Find balance between responding to your opponent and rebuilding your own case
- Strategically use new evidence and/or anecdotes when beneficial
- Create a unique, charismatic speech that is different from your opening argument

## CROSSFIRE QUESTIONS

3 minutes

### Purpose

This is the only chance for debaters to directly ask each other questions about their arguments. Debaters should find weak points in their opponent's argument with questions and use answers to strengthen their points. A good way to prepare for crossfire is to ask yourself, "if I debated myself, how would I attack my arguments?" Although you are directly speaking with your opponent, crossfire should remain civil and reflect the professionalism of both debaters, which includes not interpreting your opponent. Try to find a balance between answering questions and listening to your opponent that is fair and respectful.

### Navigating An Effective Crossfire

- Strategically ask questions to show weaknesses in your opponent's case and strengths in your own
- Maintain a fair, professional, and respectful crossfire space
- Clarify arguments with unique explanations rather than restating previous speeches
- Balance asking and answering questions

## MODERATOR QUESTIONS

3 minutes

### Purpose

Similar to a presidential debate, the judge(s) have time to ask each of the competitor's questions. The moderator can ask any questions they want, from clarifying certain points to bringing in new insights, so be prepared for anything. Use this time to show your ability to think quickly and critically. This is your only chance to speak with the judge, so do not be afraid to clarify your arguments if the moderator has not identified it correctly, but do so in a polite and professional manner. It is important to build a connection with your judge(s) during this time to leave a lasting impression.

### Responding Well To Moderators

- Show your personality and charisma since you are directly answering your judge(s)
- Be respectful of the time and be concise; the judge is asking both people questions
- Clarify and reemphasize your central argument when relevant
- Stay calm; even if you don't have an answer, do not get flustered

## CLOSING ARGUMENT

3 minutes

### Purpose

Use this time to summarize your main arguments and clarify any weak points that came up during the two questioning periods that you feel need more support. New arguments are not permitted during closing statements. Rather, restate your strongest arguments and stories and convince the judge why your position was stronger than your opponents. Since this is the last time you will speak, leave a strong lasting impression so the judge(s) will not only remember you, but also remember your arguments.

### Giving A Memorable Closing

- Summarize your arguments in an organized and convincing way
- Reemphasize your strong points that support your main argument
- If the debate round were a story, what is a good closing line to it? Make sure it is memorable!
- Clearly state why your arguments are more convincing than your opponent in a professional manner

## JUDGING

Much like other debates, the judge(s) will pick a winner at the end of the debate. In addition to persuasion, you are also being judged on five key skills:

- Display solid logic, reasoning, and analysis
- Utilize evidence but do not be driven by it
- Engage in a direct argument of ideas
- Counter the arguments of the opponent (rebuttal)
- Communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and civility

There are several ways to meet these standards, thus each debater should find their personal strengths and weaknesses. Possible strategies include: using humor, telling personal narratives, displaying respect for strong points made by your opponent, etc. Find the balance that works best for you. Remember, even if you do not agree with the side you are arguing, you should show passion and dedication to your arguments; you cannot convince the judge you're right if you don't believe it yourself.

