

About Debate

Debate is a way to explore a subject that is meaningful to a community, both formally and informally. The term debate is used broadly and in different contexts – from describing an informal exchange of views and opinions in schools or local communities to more formally in the political process or in structured competitions, with clear rules about who can speak when, about what and for how long.

‘Debate is a means to an end and not an end in itself: It’s not about winning; it’s about participating’

– anonymous

What IDEA believes

We believe that debate is a tool everyone can use as it’s a great way to exchange thoughts and ideas in a structured format, promoting informed citizenship around the world and a platform where young people can voice their views on challenging issues (which are often confrontational). Young people learn to think about what they want to say and hear different opinions; in this way, we help them contribute to solving societal issues that are relevant to them.

Meeting new people, considering other people’s points of view, developing your own ideas, verbal reasoning and listening skills are just some of the benefits and outcomes from debating. In his book, *The Practical Guide to Debating*, <http://idebate.press/> author Neill Harvey-Smith encourages learning by doing rather than memorising a speech. He summarises debate as **SALSA**:

Speaking – talking out loud fluently and without hesitation

Arguing – condensing what you say into a persuasive point(s)

Listening – hearing and understanding the points others make

Synthesizing – matching the points you and others make

Arranging – structuring your points into a persuasive speech



Types of debate: There are several debate formats and styles – both formal and informal.

Formal debate

Formal debate consists of discussions on controversial subjects that are contested by two sides. Participants on one side of the debate support a particular stance and the other side adopts a contradictory position. Participants are not usually given a choice about which side they will argue for. An audience or a judge subsequently decides which side gave the most persuasive arguments.

All forms of formal debating share these features but there are a number of different debate formats including British Parliamentary, Karl Popper, World Schools and Town Hall styles, with varying rules including:

- How many people are on each team;
- How long each person talks for and in what order;
- How and when they ask questions;
- How much preparation they're allowed;
- How the winner will be judged.

Informal debate

Informal debate advocates discussion and an exchange of ideas over competition. An example is our Debate in the Neighbourhood (DIN) programme that takes debate and its benefits out of its traditional setting and transplants it into the heart of diverse, urban communities, empowering young people to become advocates on issues that are important to them. IDEA NL has been instrumental in implementing several DIN projects in and around Amsterdam where young people are debating subjects such as the relationship between young people and the police. For further information visit <http://din.idebate.org/>

Training of trainers

The Training of Trainers is one of our main activities providing debate training for young people, coaches, youth workers and teachers and offering them an array of debate resources from our online Debatabase idebate.org/debatabase to information on how to set up a debate club.

