

Why our Scouts Debate

Debate offers an outlet for expression of ideas in a constructive way. It also helps our Scouts develop self-esteem and self-confidence. Our Scouts can debate individually or in a group. When our Scouts debate in a group, they develop teamwork skills. Our Scouts also develop creative and critical thinking skills and of course, public speaking skills



Debate has been fundamental to the development of new nations and democracies, and helps our Scouts to understand that differences of opinion need not divide us. As fully nondiscriminatory, inclusive Scout Programs, we also value debate as a way to enthusiastically exchange ideas. As a part of Scout Programs, our Scouts express their opinions and feelings while respecting those of others and embracing new ideas. Our Scouts develop an understanding that different points of view need not divide us.

What is Debate

Debate is a contest of arguments between two or more people. Debates have been around for centuries and there are many different kinds of debates with varying rules. Debate is wide and varied and one of its strengths is the ability to debate with many or few participants. Contrary to popular belief, it almost never settles an argument, but does allow for a proper way to examine all sides of an issue.

Debate and Democracy

The free exchange of ideas is a fundamental necessity of Democracies. In fact, our own Declaration of Independence and Constitution were the result of debate and compromise. The Democratic concepts behind debate are especially dear to us as Scout Programs that promote and encourage choice and individual thought.

Basics of How to Conduct a Debate

Debates can be one on one, or one Crew, or a group of a few Scouts, against another. Both sides agree on what topic will be debated.

Each side of the debate takes a few minutes to decide what the issue is all about. Each side decides which position they are going to take in the argument – for or against.

Scouts should not necessarily volunteer or be selected for an argument they agree with; it can help our Scouts to see all sides of an issue to take the side that requires them to stretch.

The opposite side takes the opposite view. Then each side considers some important points they want to make. After that, they should try to substantiate those points by considering as many facts or proofs in favor of each point as they can think of. Next, each side considers what the other side is likely to say. Then each side makes an attempt to minimize those points by considering many facts or proofs opposed to each point as they can think of. Participants should have a basic beginning, middle, and end in mind.

Scouts then present their arguments making the most persuasive points they can. A few minutes can be spent on the introduction of the topic, more spent on making each point, and finally a few minutes spent on the conclusion.

Then the opposing Scout or Crew repeats the process. If this is the end of the debate, the audience then determines the winner of the debate by analyzing the strength of their arguments. Alternatively, each Scout or Crew can then deliver a rebuttal to what the opposing Scout or Crew said.

Debate is easily adjusted depending upon the time available. If it is replacing the Activity Buffet portion of the meeting, around 45 minutes to one hour will be available. For large teams, many debates can go on at the same time, and Scouts can go round robin style, with different teams debating each other or different Scouts debating each other. It is important to allow all the Scouts to participate and have FUN. The winners can debate each other, the runners up debate each other, the second runners up, and so forth to make sure everyone is participating. For smaller teams, debates can be longer with several rebuttals and Crews can be broken up to form new teams with different Scouts to debate again.