ADJUDICATING
Outline

- Debating
- Adjudicating
- Style
- Content
- Strategy
- Definitions
- Points of Information
- Scores
- Panels
- Feedback
- Conclusions
The World Schools Debating Championships have run since 1988, and now involve more than 30 teams every year.

The World Schools Debating Championships style is a unique style, different from every separate national style. Rules, principles and intuitions from national tournaments do not necessarily apply in the WSDC style.
Debate format in the WSDC style

There are **two teams of three speakers each**.

There is a **Proposition Team**, which must agree with the motion, and an **Opposition Team**, which must disagree.

Speakers speak for **eight minutes each**, alternating between Proposition and Opposition.

After the 3rd Opposition speech, there are two ‘summary speeches’, **each of four minutes**. Each team can choose its **first or second speaker** to give the summary speech.

The Opposition summary speech comes **before** the Proposition summary speech.
The WSDC style

The typical layout of a debate

PROPOSITION
1st | 2nd | 3rd

OPPOSITION
1st | 2nd | 3rd

Speaking area

Audience

Chairperson

Adjudicator(s)
Debates in the WSDC style run like this...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Proposition</td>
<td>1st Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Proposition</td>
<td>2nd Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Proposition</td>
<td>3rd Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition Summary</td>
<td>Opposition Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The WSDC style

Roles of the speakers: The First Proposition

The **First Proposition** speaker must:

- **Define** the motion.
- **Outline** his or her arguments and the arguments of the Second Proposition.
- **Present arguments** (*e.g.* two or three arguments).
The **First Opposition** speaker must:

- **Respond** to the **First Proposition** (‘rebuttal’).
- **Outline** his or her arguments and the arguments of the Second Opposition.
- **Present arguments** (e.g. two or three arguments).
The WSDC style

Roles of the speakers: The **Second Proposition** and **Second Opposition**

The **Second Proposition** and **Second Opposition** speakers must:

- **Respond** to the preceding speaker (‘rebuttal’).
- **Outline** his or her arguments.
- **Present arguments** (e.g. two or three arguments).
The WSDC style

Roles of the speakers:
The Third Proposition and Third Opposition

The **Third Proposition** and **Third Opposition** speakers must:

- **Respond** to arguments from **all** the speakers on the other team (‘rebuttal’).
- **Relate** the main issues of the debate back to his or her own team’s case.
Roles of the speakers: Summary speeches

A summary speaker must:

- Summarise the main issues of the debate:
  - What were the main issues?
  - How did each team deal with those issues?
- Recap his or her own team’s arguments:
  - First speaker’s arguments;
  - Second speaker’s arguments.
The WSDC style

Time allocation and speaker roles

0 mins.  4 mins.  0 mins.  8 mins.

1st Proposition 1st Opposition 2nd Proposition 2nd Opposition 3rd Proposition 3rd Opposition

0 mins.  4 mins.  0 mins.  8 mins.

Opposition Reply Proposition Reply

NEW MATERIAL REBUTTAL SUMMARY

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The role of the adjudicator

The adjudicator decides **which team wins the debate**.

This is **not** the same as deciding which **side of the motion** the adjudicator agrees with. It is **irrelevant** whether the adjudicator *personally* agrees or disagrees with the proposal.

**Example**

The motion may be ‘**THIS HOUSE SUPPORTS QUOTAS FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT**’. The adjudicator may *personally* disagree with this proposal. However, if the proposition team debates more effectively, the proposition team must win.
Deciding the winner

The adjudicator must judge the debate *rationally*.

Different adjudicators *may disagree* about the result of a debate. This is no problem. But every adjudicator must have *sensible, logical reasons* for his or her opinion.

**Example**

It is legitimate to award higher marks because a speech has more *logical arguments*.

It is *not* legitimate to award higher marks because a speaker is *well dressed*. 
There are **three criteria** for adjudicating.

- **Style**
  - The way that the speaker presents

- **Content**
  - The material that the speaker presents
  Content could — in theory — be adjudicated simply by reading the text of a speech.
  (We would never actually do this, of course!)

- **Strategy**
  - The organisation of a speech
  This includes:
    - Timing
    - Recognising the key issues
    - Teamwork
How should an adjudicator combine the categories?

In the WSDC style, adjudicators must combine content, style and strategy by assigning scores.

(We discuss the marking range later.)

A speaker’s total score is the sum of the category scores, plus a mark for points of information:

\[
\text{The speaker’s score for style} + \text{The speaker’s score for content} + \text{The speaker’s score for strategy} + \text{The speaker’s score for points of information}
\]

= The speaker’s total score
How should an adjudicator combine speaker scores?

The team’s total score is the sum of the speaker scores.

\[
\text{The score for the first speech} + \text{The score for the second speech} + \text{The score for the third speech} + \text{The score for the summary speech} = \text{The team’s total score}
\]
In the WSDC style, the team that wins is always the team that scores the highest total marks wins the debate.

There are no exceptions to this rule.

However, an adjudicator should never say, ‘I thought one team won, but when I added my marks, I realised that they had lost’.

If this is the case, the adjudicator must adjust the marks.
The adjudicator’s opinion and the speaker’s scores

The scores should reflect the adjudicator’s conclusions on many different aspects of the debate.

- **Between the teams**, the team with the higher total wins.
- **Between different speakers**, the speakers who give better speeches should get higher marks.
- **Within each speech**, the marks for style, content and strategy should reflect the adjudicator’s assessment of these areas.

**Example**

Suppose the 1st Proposition speaker has better content than the 3rd Opposition, but that the 3rd Opposition has better style. Then the speakers’ content and style marks should reflect this.
Adjudicating requires **weighing different factors**

There is no such thing as an ‘automatic loss’.

There is no one thing that can, **by itself**, win or lose a debate. Instead, the adjudicator must **always** weigh a **wide variety of relevant factors**.

**Example**

In some styles of debating, a team will lose if it does not rebut every one of its opposition’s arguments. In the WSDC style, a team **should** rebut all of the opposition arguments, but a team will **not automatically lose** if it does not.
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Overview of style

What is style?

Style is about how well a speaker *communicates*.

That is, leaving aside content and strategy,

how engaging and persuasive is the speaker?

There is **no one ideal style**. Different speakers will achieve effective style in different ways.
Overview of style

An overall assessment

As with content and strategy, style must be judged by an adjudicator’s **overall assessment**.

An adjudicator may sometimes be guided by considering:

- **Visual** style and
- **Verbal** style.

**Variety** is generally an important part of effective style: both for effective visual style **and** for effective verbal style.
Some elements of visual style

Visual style may include:
- Eye contact,
- Hand gestures,
- Movement, 

These things have to be weighed in an overall assessment.

Example

Many effective speakers gesture very enthusiastically. But many effective speakers hardly gesture at all. A judge should consider gesture, but there is no single, simple rule about what is best.
Some elements of verbal style

Verbal style may include:
- Pace,
- Intonation,
- Volume,
- Variation in style, *etc.*

These things have to be *weighed* in an *overall assessment.*

**Example**

Many effective speakers speak in a loud and ‘assertive’ style. But many effective speakers use a more reserved and ‘analytical’ style. A judge should *consider* volume, but there is no single, *simple rule* about what is best.
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What is content?

Content concerns the **strength of a speaker’s arguments**.

This is **not** the same as whether the adjudicator **personally agrees** with the argument.

Content covers both a speaker’s **own arguments** and **rebuttal** of the opposition’s arguments.
Some elements of **content**

A speaker with strong content will present arguments and rebuttal that are:

- Logical,
- Well explained,
- Supported by examples, statistics, *etc.*

**Example**

Suppose a speaker presents a **logical** argument, which is clear and **explained well**. But suppose the argument has **no supporting evidence**. The adjudicator should **reward** the speaker for being logical and clear, but **penalise** the speaker for the lack of supporting evidence. As always, the adjudicator must **weigh the overall effect**.
Effective use of **examples**

Examples that are **often effective** are:
- Real,
- **Significant** and
- Carefully analysed.

Examples that are **rarely effective** are:
- Hypotheticals (‘Imagine if...’),
- Personal anecdotes (‘My friend...’),
- Extremes (‘As Hitler illustrates...’), or
- Religious texts.
Judging weak arguments

A weak argument is a weak argument **even if** the other team does not effectively rebut it.

**Example**

An adjudicator should **never** say,

`This argument was weak, but I rewarded it because it was not adequately rebutted`.

A weak argument should be **penalised**. If the other team effectively rebuts it, that team should be **further rewarded**.
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What is *strategy*?

Strategy concerns:
- Identification of **important issues** in the debate,
- Effective use of **time**,
- **Consistency** between arguments and between speeches.

We can think of strategy in terms of ‘**role fulfillment**’: a speaker has good strategy if he or she has performed his or her roles well — as a **speaker in the debate**, as a **member of a team**, *etc.*
Identifying important issues

Identification of important issues can include:

- Choice of issues as part of a **team’s own case**,
- Effective choice of issues for **rebuttal**,
- Effective comparison of arguments in **summary**.

**Example**

Suppose a speaker has two arguments to rebut: a **minor, weak argument** and an **important, strong argument**. The speaker may spend lots of time attacking the weak argument and little time on the strong argument. However, this would be **poor strategy**: the speaker should spend **more time** on the argument that is **more important**.
Consistency between arguments

Arguments must be **consistent**:
- Speakers should not contradict their own arguments;
- Speakers should not contradict their teammates’ arguments.

Further, **every speaker** must argue the case **directly**.

**Example**

Suppose a team is arguing for sanctions against China…

1st: ‘**China has a bad human rights record.**’

2nd: ‘**Sanctions are an effective response.**’

This is **poor team strategy** (a ‘hung case’): the first speaker did not directly support the case!
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The definition is not a distinct category; it is judged as part of content and strategy.

However, disagreements about the definition can be particularly difficult to adjudicate, so we now consider this issue in more detail.

Disagreements about the definition should not happen!

However, just in case...
The right of definition

The Proposition has the right to define the motion. However, in doing so, it must be **reasonable**. This means:

1. If the motion poses a **clear issue for debate**, the Proposition **must define the motion to relate to that issue**. If the motion poses a clear issue for debate, **any other definition would not be reasonable**.

2. If there is no obvious meaning to the motion, the range of possible meanings is **limited to those that allow for a reasonable debate**.
Particular issues

Any definition that leaves the Opposition **no room for debate** — for example, a definition creating a truisum or a tautology — is **unreasonable**.

Sometimes, even defining a word **literally** can be unreasonable — for example, if a motion includes an absolute (‘all’, ‘everyone’, ‘always’, ‘never’, *etc*).

‘**Squirreling**’ — the distortion of the definition to enable a team to argue a pre-prepared argument that it wishes to debates regardless of the motion actually set — is **not allowed**.
Narrowing and broadening definitions

If the motion poses a clear **issue** for debate, the Proposition must define the motion to relate to that **issue**.

This implies that the Proposition may **not** use its definition to make the debate about a **narrower issue**, nor about a **broader issue**.

**Example**

The motion may be “THIS HOUSE WOULD COMPROMISE CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE INTEREST OF SECURITY”. The Proposition **may** argue that national ID cards should be introduced; this would be an **example** of compromising liberties for security. But the Proposition **may not limit the debate simply to national ID cards**.
Narrowing and broadening definitions

That is...

- the Proposition *may* base its *case* around a single argument (though this is not necessarily a good idea!), but
- the Proposition *may not* limit the *definition* to a single argument.
Parameters for debate

‘Time setting’ and ‘place setting’ are not allowed.

Example

The motion may be “THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT PRIVATE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SUBSIDISED BY THE STATE”. The Proposition may not limit this motion to relate only to private schools in a particular country.

However, some motions implicitly require limitation.

Example

One prepared round in 2001 was on the motion “THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT GAY COUPLES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ADOPT CHILDREN”. This motion should be limited: to countries in which homosexuality is lawful.
The Opposition’s response

The Opposition may do one of three things:

1. **Accept**, or
2. **Challenge**, or
3. **Broaden**.

If the **First Opposition** does not do any of the three, the **Opposition team is taken to have accepted**.

If the Opposition **accepts** the definition, either implicitly or explicitly, the adjudicator **need not worry** about the reasonableness of the definition.
Challenging the definition

Merely **complaining** about the definition is not the same as **challenging** it. If the First Opposition wishes to challenge the definition, he or she should be very clear that he or she is doing this.

If challenging, the Opposition must:

1. Announce clearly that it is challenging,
2. Explain why the Proposition definition is *unreasonable*,
3. Provide an **alternative** (and reasonable) definition,
4. Advance a case based on its alternative definition.
Challenging the definition: An example

Example

The motion may be “THIS HOUSE WOULD BREAK A BAD LAW”. Suppose that the Proposition defines ‘bad law’ as meaning ‘a law that is impossible to obey’.

The First Opposition may challenge the definition, on the basis that it leaves the Opposition no room to argue. The First Opposition may redefine ‘bad law’ to mean ‘a law that is unjust’.

The Opposition would then proceed to provide arguments and examples to show why we should not break laws that are unjust.
The Opposition’s response

The Opposition may do one of three things:

1. **Accept**, or
2. **Challenge**, or
3. **Broaden**.

If the Opposition does not do any of the three, it is **taken to have accepted**.

If the Opposition **accepts** the definition, either implicitly or explicitly, the adjudicator **need not worry** about the reasonableness of the definition.
Broadening the definition

Merely **complaining** about the definition is not the same as **broadening** it. If the First Opposition wishes to **broaden** the definition, he or she should be very clear that he or she is doing this.

If broadening, the Opposition must:

1. Announce clearly that it is broadening,
2. Explain why the Proposition definition is **too narrow**,
3. Explain how the definition should be **broadened**,
4. Advance a case based on its broader definition.
Broadening the definition: An example

Example

The motion may be “THIS HOUSE WOULD COMPROMISE CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE INTEREST OF SECURITY”. Suppose that the Proposition limits the debate simply to national ID cards.

Then the First Opposition may broaden the definition. The First Opposition may explain that the Opposition will oppose the general principle of compromising civil liberties for national security, including the case of national ID cards.
Adjudicating definitional debates

When judging a definitional debate, an adjudicator must decide which definition should be preferred.

The Proposition has the right to define the motion. Therefore, if the Proposition definition is reasonable, the Proposition definition must be preferred.
Adjudicating definitional debates

Remember, there are **no automatic losses in the WSDC style**. It is **very important** which team’s definition is preferred, but **this decision must not, itself, determine the result**.

The adjudicator must still weigh many factors; however, in a definitional debate, the decision on which team’s definition is reasonable will be **very important** for judging both **content** and **strategy**.
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What are Points of Information?

Points of Information are *brief interjections* (questions or comments) during an opponent’s speech.

The purpose of a Point of Information is to require speakers to respond to objections against their arguments *during their speech*. They make a debate more interactive and, hopefully, more interesting.

They cannot happen in the *first or last minute* of a speech, nor in the *summary speeches*.

A speaker may *accept* or *decline* an point that is offered.

- *Each* speaker should *offer* 2–4 points *per speech*;
- *Each* speaker should *accept* 1–2 points.
Marking Points of Information

In the WSDC style, Points of Information are marked additionally to other categories.

An adjudicator must assign a mark from -2 to +2 for Points of Information. This is assigned to change the overall mark to reflect the impact of Points of Information, if necessary.

Example

Suppose a speaker gives an excellent speech. Suppose that his or her use of Points of Information is also excellent. Then the speaker should receive ‘0’ for Points of Information.
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Allocating scores: General principles

In almost all debates, there will be differences between speakers; that should be reflected in the speakers’ marks.

Speakers should be judged relative to what is a reasonable expectation for a speech at the particular level of the debate.

Example

In many countries, a speech that is ‘excellent’ at a National Schools Championships may only be considered ‘average’ at the World Schools Championships. The speech would — quite rightly — be marked more highly at the National Schools Championships.
The marking guide

In the WSDC format, adjudicators award a mark out of 40 for each of style and content and a mark out of 20 for strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD</th>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely good</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement needed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Good style’ does not necessarily imply ‘good content’, etc.
More on allocating scores

Summary speeches are marked on **half the scale**. Style and content each receive a **mark out of 20**, and strategy a **mark out of 10**, so that the **total mark is out of 50**.

Adjudicators may award **half marks** (for example, a mark of 10.5 for style). **No other fractions are allowed**!

(Half marks may **also** be awarded for the main speeches.)
Minimum and maximum scores

The **absolute minimum** score for a main speech is 60. The **absolute maximum** score for a main speech is 80.

The **absolute minimum** score for a summary speech is 30. The **absolute maximum** score for a summary speech is 40.

Adjudicators should reserve extreme scores for extremely good/poor speeches.

**Adjudicators may never go outside this range!**
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WSDC debates are adjudicated by panels:

- Each adjudicator still adjudicates the debate separately;
- The result is by majority vote.

**Example**

Suppose that there are three adjudicators. Suppose two adjudicators each award the debate to the **Proposition** by **one mark**. Suppose the other adjudicator awards the debate to the **Opposition** by **ten marks**. Then the **Proposition** wins the debate: it is ‘a majority decision of two to one’.
Panel decisions are individual decisions

WSDC debates are **always** adjudicated by each adjudicator separately.

All adjudicators must leave their mark sheets with the chair before leaving the room to confer with the panel. Adjudicators may **never** change their decision after leaving their mark sheet!
Panel discussions

The adjudication panel will meet after leaving their mark sheets, but before the result is announced.

This is an opportunity to compare reasons, in order to facilitate feedback and explanation to the debaters. Adjudicators should not use this time to try to persuade the rest of the adjudication panel to their point of view; this can always be done later, if at all!

(Please meet outside the room; let the debaters, coaches and audience remain in the room!)
Respect for disagreement

Disagreement is an important part of adjudicating at WSDC.

The **assigned chair** of the panel should present the panel decision, **even if** the chair disagrees with the result. The chair’s comments should...

1. **Acknowledge and respect** all of the views on the panel,
2. Seek to identify one or more ‘**pivot points**’ for any disagreement (for example, whether a particular rebuttal point came too late in the debate),
3. **Emphasise points of agreement** between the panel.

These principles should also apply to **all adjudicators’** individual feedback!
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Feedback: General principles

The **most important purpose** of feedback is to **explain the reasons for the result**. Adjudicators should be **clear and specific** about this.

**Example**

Adjudicators should avoid very general comments; they are usually not helpful. For example, ‘I just didn’t really like this argument...’ or ‘Your style just wasn’t very persuasive...’.

The **other important purpose** of feedback is to **help and encourage debaters to improve**. Adjudicators should give both ‘**positive**’ and ‘**negative**’ feedback, and should **make all feedback constructive**.
One possible format for presenting the result...

- **Briefly** introduce all the adjudicators;
- **Briefly** outline **style**, **content** and **strategy**;
- **Briefly** compare the teams’ **style**;
- **Briefly** compare the teams’ **content**;
- **Briefly** compare the teams’ **strategy**;
- Conclude and announce the **result**;
- Invite teams to **receive individual feedback** separately.
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Some guiding principles

Adjudicators must be **active judges** of the debate, not **mere passive observers**:

- There are no automatic results;
- Arguments are weak or strong regardless of whether they are effectively rebutted;
- **Adjudication always requires weighing of many factors.**
Some guiding principles

Adjudicators must try not to bring to a debate any preconceptions about the participating teams (for example, preconceptions based on past performance).

There is no ‘true winner’ of a debate: adjudicators may legitimately disagree. If an adjudicator is impartial and follows the WSDC style, his or her decision will be valid.
ADJUDICATING