

**Mayo Association Dublin**

**Schools’ Debating Competition 2019**

**Rules of Competition**

**(October 2019 Edition)**

**Competition structure**

* Subject to number of entrants there will be four semi-finals, with four teams of 2 speakers in each.
* One team and one individual speaker will qualify from each semi-final.
* The final will consist of four teams and four individual speakers, with a winning team and winning best speaker chosen. The winner of ‘best speaker’ can be from one of the teams or individuals in the final, though they cannot be a member of the winning team.
* Winners at all stages will be determined by a qualified adjudication panel.
* For each debate, each competitor will be sent an order paper, which will detail the topic for debate, the order of speakers, the location for the debate and other details.

**Format of THE debates**

**Semi-Finals:**

In each semi-final there will be four teams, making a total of eight speakers. Two teams will propose the motion, and two will oppose, beginning with the proposition, and speaking alternately, one member of a team at a time.

This means that the first speaker from each team will make up the first four speakers, with the second member of each team being 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th speaker respectively. This is illustrated below, with a colour code for a Red/Blue/Green/Purple team.

(1) Speaker 1, Proposition Team 1

(2) Speaker 1, Opposition Team 1

(3) Speaker 1, Proposition Team 2

(4) Speaker 1, Opposition Team 2

(5) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 1

(6) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 1

(7) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 2

(8) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 2

**The Final:**

The final will feature four teams and four individual speakers with two teams and two individuals on each side of the motion. The first member of each team speaks first, then the four individuals, then the second member of the four teams. The sequence is therefore:

(1) Speaker 1, Proposition Team 1

(2) Speaker 1, Opposition Team 1

(3) Speaker 1, Proposition Team 2

(4) Speaker 1, Opposition Team 2

(5) Individual 1, Proposition

(6) Individual 1, Opposition

(7) Individual 2, Proposition

(8) Individual 2, Opposition

(9) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 1

(10) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 1

(11) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 2

(12) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 2

**Competition Rules**

* Motions for debate will be set well in advance and competitors will have good time to prepare for the debate. Motions will identify a clear line of argument around two points of view on a major issue of public importance.
* Speakers will also be made aware of their position on the order paper at the same time as they receive the motion.
* Debates will start on time – those absent at start time will not be able to compete.
* Speeches will be of seven minutes in length. A bell will be rung after one minute, after six minutes, and after seven minutes, when the bell will be rung twice. Speakers who continue for longer than 30 seconds after their time has elapsed will be penalised.
* Points of Information may be offered from the end of the first minute (when the first bell rings) and until the sixth minute elapses (when the second bell rings). They may only be offered by participating speakers on the opposite side of the current speaker. To offer a point of information, a speaker should stand up and clearly say “Point of information”. A point of information should be no more than 10-15 seconds in length, and should be a question, or a brief statement that addresses the speaker’s current point. Points of information can be accepted or rejected at the speaker’s discretion, but each speaker should take at least two, and no more than three, during the course of their speech. If a point of information is rejected, the person offering it should immediately sit down to allow the speaker to proceed.

**Some Tips for Participants**

**Speakers in this competition should:**

1. Make a good argument, based on well-researched points about the topic for debate. Teams should have a common pattern to the arguments they are making, with the second speaker further developing aspects of the arguments laid out by the first speaker in their team.
2. Use facts drawn from research and avoid making unsupported assertions.
3. Be fluid and feel comfortable addressing their topic, relying as little as possible on written notes, other than to prompt the speaker. Reading out an entire speech is not debating.
4. Be prepared to respond and rebut specific points made by previous speakers on the other side of the debate. Speakers who do this well will be marked highly by the adjudicators – speakers who do not engage in rebuttal – other than, for obvious reasons, the opening speaker – should not expect to progress. In general terms, the second speaker in a team should devote more time to rebuttal than the first speaker on their team.
5. Take note of their tone of voice and their gestures while speaking – speakers are encouraged to practice in advance of participating. While humour is always welcome in a debate, it is must be relevant to the argument being made, and it is not an essential component of a successful speech. Jokes which make no reference to the argument in the debate do not advantage the speaker.

A particular note for individual speakers in the final – a novel or original perspective on the debate is often a successful means to make their contribution.

A workshop will be held by experienced former debaters for competitors in this competition. This will be held in Castlebar on 26 October and speakers will be given tips and guidance in this session to help them successfully participate in the competition.

*Michael Kealy*

*Chairperson*

*Mayo Association Dublin*

*October 2019*