

MAYO ASSOCIATION DUBLIN
MUINTIR MAIGH EO ÁTHA CLIATH



Mayo Association Dublin Schools' Debating Competition

Rules of Competition

2020 Edition

Competition structure

- Subject to number of entrants there will be two semi-finals, with four teams of 2 speakers in each.
- Two teams will qualify from each semi-final. There will be no individual speakers qualifying from the semi-finals. This is a change from previous years.
- The final will consist of four teams, with a winning team and winning best speaker chosen. The winner of 'best speaker' will be from one of the teams that do not win the team competition.
- 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 link for the debate and other details.

Format of 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 colour codes 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 Grand Final

The Grand Final will feature 4 teams with 2 teams on each side of the motion. The first member of each team speaks first, 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) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 1
- (6) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 1
- (7) Speaker 2, Proposition Team 2
- (8) Speaker 2, Opposition Team 2

Competition Rules

- The competition will be held remotely via an online platform. Teams will compete on their school premises during school time. The competing school's teachers will support the students in meeting all current public health and specific school guidelines.
- 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 signal will be given after one minute, after six minutes, and after seven minutes, when a double signal will be given. 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 signal is given) and until the sixth minute elapses (when the second signal is given). 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 raise a card on their screen which says “Point of information”, which will be visible to the speaker. 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 one, and no more than two,** during the course of their speech. A point of information can be accepted by the speaker calling the name and school of the person they wish to take the point from.
- NOTE: as the competition is being held online, a great deal of discretion and understanding will be applied by adjudicators in respect of delays or pauses arising from the giving of, and responding to, points of information. This discretion and understanding will also apply in the case of any delays in transition from one speaker to the next.
- In the event of connectivity problems causing issues in any debate, or in the event of any unforeseen issue arising which is not addressed in these rules, the decision of the adjudicators for that particular debate will be final.

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 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.
6. Feel free to sit or stand for their speeches as they prefer.
7. A note re the final: a winning speaker will be chosen on the basis of the best speech given by a finalist who is not on the winning team. That speech will be adjudicated upon with reference to all the points above, including the evidence of teamwork as outlined in point 1.

A workshop will be held by experienced former debaters for competitors in this competition. Speakers will be given tips and guidance in this session to help them successfully participate in the competition.

Mayo Association Dublin

November 2020