

PREPARING SECRET TOPIC DEBATES

1. Introduction

Secret topic debates test teams' ability to debate under time pressure and without research. This guide is intended to provide teams with a practical guide to preparing secret topic debates. The rules for secret topic debates are found in the *UniSA SADA Schools' Competition Program* and are not discussed here.

To succeed at secret topic debates, teams must carefully manage their time to ensure that they are ready to debate at the expiry of the 1.5 hours of allotted preparation time. In addition, teams should make an effort to engage with news and current affairs over the course of the year to equip them to debate without research.

The process for preparing current events and prepared topic debates is substantially similar to preparing secret topic debates: the only differences are the time and resources available to teams. Therefore, teams should aim to use the process set out below for all of their debates. Teams should feel free to adapt this system to suit them.

2. Allocation of preparation time

2.1 *Individual brainstorm – 5 minutes*

Speakers should silently brainstorm the topic. All relevant ideas in relation to definitions, models, examples and arguments should be written down. The aim should be for speakers to immerse themselves in the topic and be ready to engage their teammates in a discussion of the main issues that the topic gives rise to.

2.2 *Sharing ideas – 10 minutes*

Speakers should take turns sharing their ideas with the rest of the team. If a whiteboard is available, one member of the team may wish to write down the ideas on the whiteboard. Otherwise, each team member should note all the ideas on their pad.

The aim should be for the team to have consolidated the ideas of each individual member. At this stage, the discussion does not need to go into great detail; teams should aim to cover as much ground as possible and have a rough idea of what their side of the topic will need to argue, and how it should go about arguing it.

2.3 *Definition and model or test – 15 minutes*

Once teams are broadly across the subject matter of the debate they should plan their definition and model or test (depending on whether it is a policy or empirical debate). This will give teams a framework within which to prepare their substantive material.

2.4 *Prepare substantive arguments – 25 minutes*

By this point, teams should have a whiteboard or pad full of ideas and a full formed definition and model or test. Teams then need to plan out each argument in detail, including any examples they are going to use for each argument. It is important that each member of the team contributes to and is familiar with each argument in detail. This ensures consistency between speakers and that each point is thoroughly developed.

2.5 *Team split and organisation of individual speeches – 5 minutes*

Once teams have planned their individual arguments, they should divide the arguments among their first and second speakers and determine which order the points will be presented. At this point, teams should be ready to debate.

2.6 *Finalising speeches, discussing potential rebuttal – 30 minutes*

Teams should use the remainder of their allotted time to run through their speeches, discuss any aspects of the case they are unsure of and plan their responses to opposition arguments.