

# A Guide to Hosting

This guide has been written to help schools host a regional round of the Oxford Union Schools' Debating Competition; much of the advice is, however, applicable to hosting any debating event. At a regional round, each team debates twice and several teams are selected to go forward to Finals' Day. The motions for the debates are released fifteen minutes in advance.

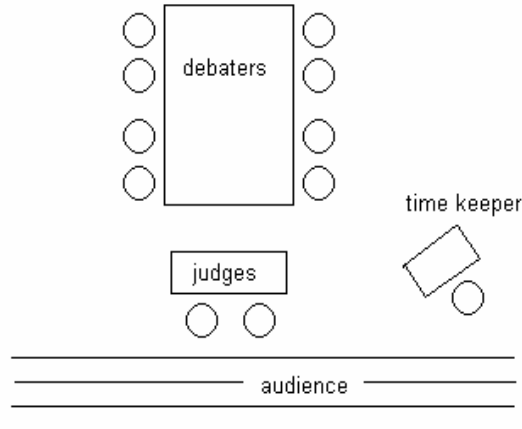
We are very grateful to schools that volunteer to host regional rounds; if your school would like to do so, please indicate this when you complete the application form (available on [www.oxfordschools.org.uk](http://www.oxfordschools.org.uk)) or e-mail us at [convenor@oxfordschools.org.uk](mailto:convenor@oxfordschools.org.uk). Hosting is an excellent opportunity for many pupils to encounter debating, by watching debates involving pupils from across the region; hosting also removes the need to travel to a regional round elsewhere.

## What you need to host a regional round

### **Rooms**

You will need to make available one large room and several small rooms. Please ensure that the rooms are booked for the entire evening; there is nothing more disturbing than people walking in and out of the room during speeches! Your regional convenor will be able to tell you what time the round is scheduled to start and finish. While we make every effort to keep to schedule, please bear in mind that regional rounds sometimes take longer than planned, particularly if some teams arrive late or there is a close judging decision to be made.

- **The large room** is used to announce which teams will debate where and to give the results of the round. Teams congregate in this room before the round begins, between the two debates and at the end of the round. The large room should be large enough to accommodate all the people coming to the competition. Each school competing will bring two speakers and at least one teacher. They may also bring spectators: the Regional Convenor will try to find out how many spectators are likely to attend and will advise you of this. There will be judges and all your own students as well.
- **The smaller rooms** are used to hold the debates. Each room must be able to hold eight debaters, two or three judges and some spectators. The number of smaller rooms will depend upon the number of teams in the round; the Regional Convenor will advise you of this in advance. Please could you ensure that there is a stopwatch, which will be used for timing debates, in each smaller room; it is usually possible to borrow stopwatches from the Science or Physical Education department. These smaller rooms must be set up in a specific way. There should be a table with four chairs on each side at the front of the room; this is where the debaters will sit. There should be another table with two chairs facing the debating table; this is for the judges. If one of the pupils at your school is going to be timekeepers, there should also be somewhere for them to sit. The audience can sit anywhere, providing that the debaters and judges have plenty of room. There is a diagram of the room plan on the next page.



### Pupils to help

One of the aims of regional rounds is to allow other pupils to watch debates and learn from them; there are also various ways in which other pupils can be a great help to the smooth running of the event. The judges will be happy to explain these roles to the pupils concerned, if necessary.

- The most important and necessary job for pupils is that of **Timekeeper**. Timekeepers make one bang on the table (or ring of a bell, or clap of their hands) one minute into the speech, one bang four minutes into the speech and two bangs at five minutes. The one and four minute bangs let the debaters know when they may make points of information. The five minute bang indicates that the speaker should stop speaking. This is a very important role, and this must be impressed upon any pupil given this job. Since timing and points of information are important factors for judges, it is important that the time keeper gets the bangs right, to be fair to all the speakers. Timekeepers should also write down the total length of each speech, and give this information to the judges after the debate. The judges will be able to keep time if necessary, but it is a good role to give to an enthusiastic pupil who is not debating this time.
- A group of **guides** is needed to take debaters to the rooms. This is less necessary if the rooms are all next to each other and clearly sign-posted.
- You should also have **at least two pupils who can debate should a team drop out at the last minute**. This is known as a dummy team. They will not be competing for a slot at Finals' Day and will not be judged: they are merely filling a slot enabling the debate to take place. However, this is a good way to practise debating and the judges will happily give constructive feedback if the members of the dummy team would like it. If the number of teams expected at your regional round is not a multiple of four, we may ask you to find up to six pupils who could form up to three dummy teams. If this is a problem, please let us know and we will try to get another school to bring extra debaters.

### Refreshments

Refreshments are by no means essential; some schools are, however, happy to provide light refreshments for the debaters, teachers, spectators and judges (e.g. tea, coffee, juice, sandwiches or biscuits). Debaters often particularly appreciate a jug of water and some cups in each of the rooms used for debates. The Competition may be able to make a modest financial contribution for refreshments; please contact the Convenors if this would be of assistance.

### **Timetable on the Day**

Regional rounds will all be working on different timetables. The Regional Convenor will discuss the starting time with you and will advise how long the round is likely to take. If the round is set to start at 5pm, the timetable is likely to be something like this, but please bear in mind that the lengths of time allocated are only approximate.

4.30 – 5.00	Teams arrive
5.00	Welcome and introduction by Regional Convenor
5.15	Announcement of first debate's motion and speaking positions
5.30	First debate begins
6.45	Announcement of second debate's motion and speaking positions
7.00	Second debate begins
8.30	Announcement of teams selected for Finals' Day

### **Contact us**

Please contact the Convenor if you have any queries about hosting:  
([convenor@oxfordschools.org.uk](mailto:convenor@oxfordschools.org.uk))

Your region will be assigned a Regional Convenor, who will be responsible for running the Regional Round on the day. The Regional Convenor will also be more than happy to assist with any concerns or questions you might have.