

How Oxford Can Help You Start Debating

Debate Workshops

We send students across the country to give debate workshops. We split the country into thirteen regions, each of which will have its own workshop. The workshop is given as part of our Schools Competition, and therefore has no entry cost. Schools not entering the competition this year are welcome to attend.

- workshops take place in schools across the country
- are given by experienced debaters trained in coaching debate
- operate from a lesson plan created by Oxford debaters
- cater for different levels of experience.

Workshops have been developed by experienced members of Oxford's senior coaching team, all of whom have enjoyed considerable success in both national and international debating competitions and who have extensive judging experience. The aim of all workshops will be to provide an enjoyable and informative afternoon for pupils, so that hopefully they will be equipped and want to continue to debate.

General Support

The Oxford Union publishes a handbook on Schools Debating which has information on the basics and rules of debating, and also details of the competition.

We also have a number of information sheets available for teachers and students, on subjects such as:

- An Introduction to British Parliamentary Debate
- Debating Games
- How to Host a Debate
- Starting a Debating Society in your school

Perhaps the most useful way we can be of use is as a contact point for questions. This past year we have helped schools with problems such as how to attract more members, and putting them in contact with other schools in their area so they can debate against each other.

This year we have also managed to arrange for schools in the area to pay a visit to the Oxford Union for one of the famous Thursday night debates. The continuation of this is of course entirely at the discretion of the president.

The Oxford Union School's Debating Competition

Every year the Oxford Union run a Schools Debating Competition. This allows pupils to practise debate against other schools in their area, and get feedback from experienced Judges on how to improve. Entrance to the Competition is £32. However, Bursaries are available for schools that otherwise would not be able to enter the competition.

The competition takes place in two stages:

1. Regional Rounds

We send Judges and Convenors to ten regions across the country to organise regional competitions.

- The competition will take place in a school central to the region in one evening.
- There will be two debates, done in the format we taught in the workshop
- The debates will be on topics that we would expect school age pupils to have heard something about. The motion for debate will be released fifteen minutes before the debate itself to encourage the pupils to think on their feet and discourage extensive preparation that gives an unfair advantage to some teams.
- Judges will be Oxford students who are experienced debaters themselves and who have been trained in how to judge a debate properly. They will be available after debates to give extensive feedback to pupils on how they could improve and what they are doing well.

The regional rounds are held to select the best teams in the country who will progress to the Grand Finals Day, but more importantly, provide the invaluable experience of a high quality competition and good judging to every school in the region.

2. Grand Finals Day

The Grand Finals Day gives the top teams in the country the opportunity to visit and debate in the Oxford Union in March. Teams debate in four preliminary rounds in the same way they did in the regional round. Again, experienced judges will be on hand to give extensive feedback.

The top eight teams will break to semi finals, after which dinner will be provided in the Union. There will then be the last debate of the day - the Grand Final - held in the Oxford Union Chamber. The quality of the Final is usually extremely high, and it is well worth teams who are not in it staying to watch.