

RESEARCH

Research is the cornerstone of all that you will do in HHS Debate, and for that matter, in any debate setting. Without it, you'll be stranded (it's obvious to any semi-intelligent person when you haven't done your research). This page will break the research process down into a few easy steps that you can use. The goal is that when you get the general idea of how to do good research, you will tweak and change this process to better fit your own method.

Get the Foundation

If..... you are debating something that concerns a committee or organization, go to its web page, or look up that committee or organization in an encyclopedia.

you are debating something that concerns a previous act or resolution (anything of the written sort), go find that written work first.

you are debating the right way to fix a current problem, look up the background of that problem: previous conflicts, previous attempted solutions, possible causes of the conflict

A Little Deeper

The next step of the research process is to not only research the background of your "side," but also to research the backgrounds of the opposing parties (who, what, when, where). Another helpful key is to find out the motives behind the positions taken. When you know these, it is easier to prepare because you can anticipate what the other party may use for their argument.

Details, Details, Details

In some cases, it is helpful to go further than researching a party's view. Instead, actually research key people in the real-life debate: read their speeches and find their sources.

In other cases, it is advisable to go into debate knowing the implications of what possible decisions would have; what would happen if this legislation (or resolution) were passed? You don't want to make decisions that ignore the possible effects on various groups. This will not make you a popular debater.

Research your topic until you formulate a standpoint that you can defend, regardless of what questions or challenges are put to you. This may seem like a daunting task, but practice plays a big part. Have others ask you questions, or conceive arguments against you that might come from the opposition in a debate. As long as you know the background information, you will be ready and armed to confront and dispel whatever is thrown at you.

DICTION AND POISE

What is diction and why is it important?

When you are giving a speech, no matter how valid and intelligent your points may be, not a single person in the chamber will understand and support your position unless you speak clearly and pronounce all of your consonants... in other words, employ DICTION!

So how do I do this diction thing?

As a wise teacher once said, "diction is done with the tip of the tongue and the teeth." With a little practice and consciousness of its existence during your speeches, you'll be understood in no time. A good way to practice diction is by slowly repeating the following rhyme, pronouncing all of your consonants clearly and elongate your vowels.

Practice Rhyme:

To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark, dock
In a pestilential prison with a life long lock,
Awaiting the sensation of a short, sharp, shock
From a cheap and chippy chopper
On a big, black, block.

POISE

Speakers with poise appear to be comfortable in their own skin. They project an air of confidence and appear to be ready for anything. Poise can be inherent or it can be learned through practice and observation. It can, however, be taken too far into arrogance. Remember, it's okay to not always have an answer at the ready. Poise can mean saying, "I haven't thought about that, but I'll mull it over and get back to you."

Do...

- Have a clean appearance! At conferences, classy western business attire is a must. Boys should be clean-shaven and girls should keep hair out of the face.
- Stand up straight! Your posture communicates a lot to other delegates in terms of professionalism, approachability, and to some, power. It also does wonders in making you look attentive, so remember it not only when giving a speech, but when listening to others speak as well as during un-moderated caucus.
- Speak clearly and loudly. Make sure you are loud enough so that the person in the room furthest from you can hear every syllable.

Don't...

- shoot someone down for asking what might seem like a silly question. It's not professional, and you won't gain allies for it.
- act the part of the "bad" country/senator even if everyone in the chamber is shooting down your ideas or deploring your actions. Rudeness will get you nowhere. One who performs with the greatest poise is one who can accept criticism and compromise.

CHAIRING

The chair is one of the only people at the meeting who do not take part in the debate. However, because the chair actually runs the meeting, s/he has major power and responsibility.

A chair has a very demanding job to do. Throughout the debate, the chair's various responsibilities include:

- calling on speakers and question-askers
- taking and responding to points and motions
- keeping the chamber in order

Things to keep in mind while chairing:

1. Know parliamentary procedure in and out, backwards and forwards. It is not a bad idea to have the sheet explaining the various points and motions on the desk in case you need a reminder.
2. Keep order (decorum) in the meeting. If people are disrespectful or talk out of turn, don't hesitate to bang the gavel and call for decorum.
3. The timekeeper is there to help you, so you don't have to watch the clock. Make sure that you and the timekeeper are sure of your responsibilities, so everything gets done.
4. Spread out whom you call on. The timekeeper will be keeping a list of who has spoken or asked questions. Make sure not to favor certain people or certain sections of the room. If only the same few people are participating, remind the chamber that everyone should participate.
5. You and the timekeeper should both count hand votes and then compare your numbers.
6. Speak loudly and with confidence, so everyone can hear you.
7. When ten seconds of time remain in a speech, the timekeeper will let you know. Tap gently as a reminder. When time is up, bang the gavel but let the speaker finish his or her sentence.
8. Get to the meeting on time, so you are ready to call it to order.
9. Remember that many motions are at the discretion of the chair. Use your judgment about suspensions of the rules, motions for caucuses, and motions to close debate.
10. If you are chairing soon, watch the chair closely for other minor details of chairing.
11. If you are interested in chairing, contact the vice president, who will assign you a meeting to chair if one is available. There is no experience requirement for chairing. You must only know the rules and be prepared.

TIMEKEEPING

What is a Timekeeper?

A Timekeeper is the person who assists the chair during debate. He/she has the responsibility of keeping track of who speaks, who asks questions, how much time is left, and informing the chair when a speaker's time is up. The timekeeper may participate in debate.

Why do we need a Timekeeper?

With so many responsibilities, the job of a chair can be very demanding. As a result the timekeeper position was created, to lighten the load off the chairs shoulders. The following functions are now the jobs of the Timekeeper:

- keeping track of time
- keeping a log of who speaks and asks questions
- reading legislation and proposed amendments

By saving the chair lots of time, the Timekeeper allows the chair to run debates more efficiently and increase the amount of speakers that can take the floor. The other reason for having Timekeepers is so newer members can pick up parliamentary procedure and chairing skills for the future. One day, when the chairs of today have gone on to college, it will be the responsibility of today's Timekeepers to take their place and ensure that HHS Debate meetings run as smoothly as ever. A Timekeeper can also be helpful to first-time chairs. By pairing an experience Timekeeper with a novice chair, we can make sure that if the chair stumbles on procedural issues that he/she can always turn to the Timekeeper for assistance.

How do I become a Timekeeper?

It's easy! Just consult your friendly neighborhood vice president, and s/he will promptly assign you to a particular debate at which you can keep time to your heart's content.

TICKET SELLING

1. Bring a bagged lunch and get down to the commons as soon as possible, there will be people waiting for you to relieve them (unless you're the 4th period seller in which someone will drop off the box at the beginning of the period). If you need a late pass for class, go to one of the advisors' classrooms.
2. You are responsible for ticket selling in your period for entire designated period of ticket selling. If you are not in school please let Mr. Fenster know as early as possible so a replacement can be arranged for (email rfenster@hillsborough.k12.nj.us). Or, even better, have a replacement lined up ahead of time (still be sure to tell Mr. Fenster as it affects advisorbucks).
3. You and the other authorized ticket sellers are the only ones allowed behind the snack bar or table. Your friends are not allowed to sell tickets or hang out with you.
4. Since we are pre-selling the tickets and they are for designated seats, you need to highlight the seats. Please do not let the customer do the highlighting.
5. If the tickets disappear during your lunch period, you are responsible.
6. Keep the cash box closed and pointed away from the customers. Place large bills under the money tray inside the box.
7. No one gets a discount (except the performers who get in for free).
8. NO CHECKS WILL BE ACCEPTED!
9. Refunds may be given. Mark the seating chart on the seat with an "R" for returned.
10. Sell out the front section (closest to the stage) before selling the back section. If people start hassling you, tell them they are not printed yet.
11. Mr. Fenster or a veteran member of HHS Debate may come down to see how things are going and collect a wad of money each period.
12. Be polite and friendly. "Enjoy the show" is a nice phrase to throw in there after someone makes a purchase.
13. Eighth period sellers must return the cash box to the designated teacher's room. You may leave lunch a few minutes early (or if business prevents that, the designated teacher will write you a pass to get to 9th period).