



Haydarpaşa Lisesi
—1934—

Part 6

PRACTICE EXERCISES



How can I spread my time over the week?

Let's imagine you have five days before your competitive debate. Here is a possible timeline which you might find useful.

5

DAYS

- Initial brainstorm.
- Trial debate during a training session.
- Debrief and allocation of tasks.

4

DAYS

- Further research and reading for examples and points that may have been overlooked.
- First draft of speeches written by the speakers themselves should be finished.

3

DAYS

- First drafts should be edited in the light of new points and examples uncovered.
- The logical consistency and stylistic qualities of each speech should be reviewed following the edits.

2

DAYS

- Speakers should give their speeches with other members offering POIs.
- Second check for logic and style of Speakers' speeches.

1

DAY

- Speakers should give their speeches yet again, but this time with the required number of POIs, within the required time.
- This should not involve losing parts of the logic or style as planned.

SHORT-PREPARATION DEBATES

What's different about short preparation debates?

Two factors make short-preparation debates more stressful but also more exciting:

1. You have no research material apart from an almanac, dictionary and, for certain competitions, printed news articles or books.
2. You face serious time pressure to prepare a case with your team, get it written down and checked during attempts at practising the speeches.

The lack of research material can be scary if you have not competed often as a debater. It gradually becomes less of a problem. Eventually, it may benefit you.

Why so? Because the material you use or remember while preparing for a short-preparation debate is likely to be so vivid that it remains in your long-term memory.

Furthermore, your use of material is likely to be more spontaneous and active than in a long-preparation debate where it becomes stored passively and is taken for use from memorisation rather than thinking on the spot.

Time pressure may appear frightening at the start. But it can help you make good choices.

It forces you to speed up preparation. To do this, you have to dump bad ideas quickly so that your team can start preparing the actual arguments. As you become more experienced, you are likely to find it more fun engaging the points another Speaker raises on the spot, just as you might enjoy gaining possession of the ball from the opposing team when you are playing a football match.

Apart from these two differences, working with an hour before a debate is an experience that is very similar what I suggested for long-preparation debates.



So how can I work with an hour before a debate?

Here is a timeline for a short-preparation debate.

Again, this timeline comes with a warning: **do not conform to it completely.**

From my experience in short-preparation debates, it is impossible to declare that you want your arguments to all emerge by 15 minutes. Neither can you demand that your Speakers to have all finished writing notes for their speeches by 40 minutes.

Every debate is different. Every preparation session is different

60
MINUTES

45
MINUTES

35
MINUTES

15
MINUTES

10
MINUTES

5
MINUTES

- Get the motion.
- Check everyone has got the same wording for the motion.
- Silent brainstorm.

- Team captain starts discussion on clash in the debate.
- All team members should contribute to the discussion.
- All team members agree on the major arguments, examples to be used and what the likely opposing arguments are.
- If this has not been decided beforehand, teams should decide on who will speak for the round. This should be done primarily based on who is most comfortable making the arguments in the debate at hand. If there is no consensus on this, a vote should be taken and the captain should cast the deciding vote if there is a tie.

- Speakers begin writing their arguments (in note form).
- Where necessary, members of the team who are not speaking for the round may help do the following:
 - Think of additional examples besides those agreed on by the team earlier;
 - Check for weaknesses in the team's arguments which were not previously addressed; and
 - Explore any opposing arguments which were overlooked earlier.

- Speakers should complete their cases.
- Speakers should begin to read out their cases to the rest of the team, who should listen carefully.
- Speakers should edit their speeches based on errors they identify with their teammates along the way.

- Speakers should check that their cases fit the time requirements.
- Speakers **MUST** be made aware of the strongest attacks their opponents can make and the instinctive responses they can offer.
- Team stance should be confirmed. A short statement of this in a sentence is often called a **BASELINE ARGUMENT**.
- Points of information that may be offered to the opponents should be noted.

- Tidy the room used for preparation.
- Check that the Speakers' attire is fine.
- Check that all materials required have been taken and any notes to be used are arranged in the correct order.
- Begin walking to the debate venue (if necessary).

The point of my timeline is to offer you a sense of the steps I think you should take in order to reach a sound and convincing case. Do not force yourself to cover all of the steps in the timeline unless it is a debate your team has done in the past many times successfully.

It is better to complete the earlier steps in the timeline WELL than to complete all the steps in a mediocre or even poor fashion. Debating is NOT a science practical assessment where you must complete all the recommended procedures in order to succeed.

As you gain more experience debating, you may add more steps, change the sequence of some steps or skip over some steps altogether.



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Thank you!

