

The World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC)

EXPLANATION AND HISTORY OF WSDC

The World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) bring together articulate young people from around the world – debating for their countries. Students from over 50 countries, representing every of the world's continents, have taken part in WSDC since its inception, in Australia, in 1988.

As well as encouraging competition between the most talented young debaters in the world, the WSDC aims to promote international understanding and celebrate free speech. As such, competing teams are expected to be prepared to take on any issue, and debate with any other country. Typically, the debates cover a range of political, moral, cultural and economic issues.

The WSDC started as a small collection of countries – only Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England, Hong Kong and the United States competed in the 1988 edition. But in the twenty-five years since, the countries participating have expanded dramatically to include many nations in Latin America (e.g. Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru), the Middle East (e.g. Israel, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait), Africa (e.g. Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe) and Asia (e.g. Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines).

WSDC FORMAT

Each nation sends a team of up to 5 people but only 3 speak in any given debate, there are two teams in each debate and each one is allocated a side of the motion.

Each speaker gives an 8-minute-long speech that supports their side of the motion in accordance with their various speaker roles; for example, the first speaker must contextualise the debate, set the definitions and provide substantiated arguments for their side of the debate.

The first and last minute of each of the main speeches is referred to as protected time. This means that no interruptions to the speech are permitted. During the rest of the speech, debaters from the other team may attempt to interrupt the speaker with short questions or comments called points of information.

After the main speeches, the debate moves on to the reply speeches that are given by either the first or second speaker of each team with the opposition going first. No points of information are permitted during this speech. Reply speeches last 4 minutes and are supposed to give a biased overview of the debate by indicating why the main arguments of the debate fall on their side in order to help the judges decide who to vote for.

Details of the competition:

The tournament takes place over two weeks, with all teams taking on eight others in "preliminary debates".

Across all debates, teams have three members: all three deliver an eight-minute speech, but the "leader" gives an additional four-minute reply at the end.

Four of these preliminary debates are prepared. Teams are told in advance of travelling to the tournament what the topics will be and have ample time to research and prepare. The other four rounds are impromptu, with the topic revealed to both teams one hour prior to the start of the debate.

Based on the results of these preliminary rounds, the top 16 teams then advance or "break" to the knockout phase of the competition, in which the loser of each debate is eliminated until the final two are left standing for a Grand Final. All knock-out round debates are impromptu.

After all the rounds and awarding the Championship cup to the Winner of the Grand Final, the Tournament also awards prizes to the Best English as a Foreign Language Team and Speaker, the Best English as a Second Language Team and Speaker and the Best Speaker overall.

