

MANNER AND ETIQUETTE

1. Introduction

Speakers receive a manner score based on how persuasively they present their speech. This guide will provide some advice on how debaters can improve their manner. This guide will also discuss a number of accepted conventions as to how debaters should conduct themselves before, during and after debates. Adhering to these conventions and standards of behaviour will give debaters the best chance to succeed.

More information about manner, and debating more generally, can be found in the *SADA Guide to Adjudicating* and the *Australia-Asia Debating Guide*.

2. Etiquette

Debating is a formal activity. It is therefore important that debaters display the standards of behaviour expected at any other formal school activity.

2.1 *Before the debate*

Debaters should arrive on time and promptly fill out the chairperson, timekeeper and adjudication forms. For prepared topic debates debaters should arrive at the venue 20 minutes before the start of the debate. For secret topic debates debaters should arrive at the venue 10 minutes before topics are released. After their preparation time has expired they should make their way to the room in which the debate will be held and fill out the forms.

2.2 *During the debate*

2.2.1 During other speeches

Debaters obviously need to communicate with their team during the debate to discuss rebuttal and points of information. However, this should be kept to a quiet whisper so

as not to distract the speaker or the adjudicator. Similarly, debaters should refrain from overly demonstrative or distracting reactions to opposition speeches.

Debaters must not communicate with anyone except the other speakers on their team during the debate. Audience members should not signal or communicate to the debaters in any way.

There are particular conventions for offering and accepting points of information. These are discussed in more detail in dedicated resources on the SADA Website.

2.2.2 During your speech

- Speak from the middle of the 'stage', between the teams' tables and in front of the chairperson and timekeeper.
- Speakers may begin their speech with 'good evening ladies and gentlemen'. Special guests, the adjudicator, opposition etc should not be individually acknowledged.
- Speakers should address and look at the entire audience, not just the adjudicator, their own supporters or the opposition.
- Ignore any distractions; the chairperson and adjudicator are responsible for maintaining order.
- Conduct themselves in a manner befitting a school event.

2.3 *After the debate*

The captain of each team (starting with the captain of the losing team) should give a brief vote of thanks to their coaches, the audience, adjudicator, etc.

3. **Manner**

Manner is scored according to a speaker's persuasiveness, as outlined in the *SADA Guide to Adjudicating*. While there is no single ideal presentation style, there are a number of ways in which debaters can improve their manner.

3.1 *Style of speaking*

Variation in tone, speed, pitch and volume is important to ensure that the audience does not become bored. This is often called 'light and shade'.

Speaking style should change according to the point being made. When attacking an outrageous opposition argument a speaker may wish to use a slightly louder and more forthright manner. When going through technical details or a model a slower, more considered manner is usually more appropriate.

As a general rule debaters with good manner speak slower. Pausing at appropriate moments in a speech is also important; good times to pause include between arguments or important statements and between different sections of a speech, for example following rebuttal.

3.2 *Eye contact*

Eye contact should be made with different audience members during a speech. Speakers should not stare at one person or object the whole time. Speaking using notes, as opposed to having the entire speech written out, on cue cards facilitates good eye contact as it stops speakers reading.

3.2.1 Cue cards

Pieces of A4 paper should not be used. Cue cards should be small enough to fit comfortably in one hand. Notes on cue cards should be large and clear so that they can be read quickly at a glance. Cue cards should all be the same size and should be held around waist or stomach height whilst speaking. Speakers may find it useful to number their cue cards to ensure that they stay in order. Similarly, speakers should only write on one side of each card.

3.3 *Stance and gestures*

Speakers should stand reasonably still whilst speaking and should not pace or rock from foot to foot. However, speakers should remain relaxed and not appear too rigid. Subtle movements of the head upper body and feet enable a speaker to move to look at different members of the audience and appear natural.

Using a variety of natural, measured hand gestures will add interest to a speech, but should not become distracting.