ESU TEACHING RESOURCE

ARGUING WITH YOURSELF

OVERVIEW

This activity will help you to develop stronger arguments. The best arguments are those that withstand the most critique – to make our arguments stronger, we need to practise anticipating our opponent's responses, and evading them.

OBJECTIVES

- To practise making speeches
- To develop the habit of thinking of opposition responses in prep time
- To practise using predictions of opposition material to strengthen your own arguments

TASK

Choose a debate motion – it can be one you've used before in practice or seen at a competition, or something completely new you've heard of and want to try.
Give yourself 10 minutes to consider the motion as if you are the first government team. Write some brief notes covering:
- The mechanism and any other introductory points you might want to make
- A rough outline of the arguments your (first government) team would make in this debate
Now choose one of your arguments to work on – maybe choose the one you think will be most controversial, or choose one you feel less confident explaining. Give yourself around 5 minutes to think about this argument. How can you express it best? Make a few notes, and if you like, deliver the argument as if in a debate (a mirror or a camera can help).
Now imagine that you are the opposition team, and have just heard that argument. What would your responses be? Write a few notes, or deliver the rebuttal out loud.
Repeat this exercise with a few different arguments from that motion – try delivering opposition arguments as well. Practising working in this way will help you to anticipate your opponent's responses in competitive situations.

For an extra challenge…
If you feel pretty confident with your rebuttal skills, try adding an extra stage. Once you have given an argument and responded to it, return to your original argument. Think about how you can change it, now that you anticipate that response. This may involve giving more description to set the scene of your argument; it may involve adding more detail in some way; or it may involve being clear about what you are *not* saying.