

## Points of Information (POIs)

Disclaimer: The provided lesson applies to the rules of British Parliamentary Debates. If you have need to practice POIs in another debate format feel free to adjust to that format.

### A. Goal of the lesson

- they understand the basics of POI strategy.
- they practice how to formulate and to offer POIs

### B. Activities

1. Introduction (5 Min): Everybody tells their name and what makes a good POI.

Tip: Take some Notes. So, you can remember their names more easily. And you can even give credit for saying clever things, when you give the lecture, i.e. "As ... already suggested, it is really important to...". Showing appreciation for their contributions is the key to happy participants 😊

2. Short Lecture (10 Min):

#### a) What is a POI?

Trainer explains what a POI is, i.e. a question or a remark to the person speaking, a strategic option to react spontaneously, an opportunity to answer indirectly to a point outside your speeches etc.

#### b) When do ask them?

- POIs are allowed between minute 1:00 and 6:00 of each speech
- Offering POIs creates an engaging impression, so the earlier the better
- Sneaky Tricks No1 – Shadowing: This strategy says that whenever a member of the other team on your side of the debate offers a POI, you will also stand up and offer a POI! Since on average your side will most likely get 4 POIs in the whole debate, stealing a POI from the other team can change the position you get!

#### c) Who is asking?

Generally, both teammates should be engaging in POIs if possible. Except: One of you just gave his/her speech and the other one will give his/her speech next  in that case the first speaker of your team should focus on POIs, while the second one prepares a rebuttal.

#### d) When do accept a POI?

Rule No 1: Never accept an POI in the middle of a sentence!

Rule No 2: Best moment is after you finished explaining your first point, before you start with our second point. Thus, you are less likely to lose the structure of the speech.

#### e) Whose POI do you accept?

This is an additional "advanced level" question that you may include if you feel, it makes sense for your group. According to the answer there are many philosophies on this question.

Tipp: Think about our requirements in this workshop and then decide. Is it more useful, if they take notes or you prepare a visualization or if you bring along handouts?

### 3. Exercise - How to construct a POI (15 min per round)

The importance of this exercise comes from two directions: On the one hand it can be really embarrassing and make your team look bad, when your POI happens to be incomprehensibly formulated. On the other hand a well formulated POI can be killing! In this exercise they get the task to develop several POIs. In order to do so the trainer has to define a setting (motion, case etc.) or to give a 1<sup>st</sup> gov speech on which the POIs will be applied. The exercise consists of three phases:

1. Producing quantity (2 min): Everybody makes up three POIs
2. Deciding on quality (4 min): In teams of two, they exchange their POIs and decide on the best one.
3. Feedback from the trainer (or the group): Now every team introduces their best POI and the trainer or a volunteer simulates how he/she would answer to this in the debate. Finally the trainer announces which was the best POI here and why.

Tipp: This exercise leads to better learning effects, the more often it is done. A second or third round are absolutely worth the time!

## C. Preparation

Prepare motions, according to the number of rounds in exercise 3, that suit the experience level of your participants

## D. Hints

- E.g. what should happen during exercise, what trainer should avoid, what are the common problems, etc.

## E. Verification

- What can trainer do to conclude the lesson (possibly model questions for conclusions) and particular activities.
- What should every trainer do to learn from the lesson for the future:
  - What activity/example/discussion produce best results at this lesson?
- What was the biggest problem during the lesson? How can I avoid/prevent it in future?
- Did I avoid/prevent the biggest problem which occurred the last time? If no, why?

Effective note-taking

## A. Goals of the lesson

- they understand why note taking is important in debating
- they find out several criteria of effective and efficient notes
- they learn several styles of debate notes
- they have the opportunity to try find a style of notes that suits their individual needs

## B. Activities

### 1. Introduction (10 min)

“My name is ... and for me debate notes are like the knife for the chef at a restaurant: If my notes are excellent – my debate results can be excellent. If my notes suck, my speeches also do.” [alternatively some personal story about your debate notes ;]”

Guiding Question: “Please tell us your name (and debate club if necessary) and explain, why you take notes in a debate. What is the advantage of having notes for your speech?”

Tipp: Write down keywords of their answers, i.e. on board or flipchart, so that the reasons are present and visualized for the rest of the training.

Tipp: Your training becomes transparent for your participants, when you explain, what the goal of the training is – now would be the moment to do so. It makes a good connection between the introduction and the exercise.

## **2. Talking about different styles of notes (20 min)**

“Obviously there are very different styles of notes possible. [recommendation: Have a few different notes prepared or real notes from different debaters, which you can show around] Let us talk about the styles and their advantages or disadvantages.”

For this part the trainer is the moderator of the talk AND has to collect the results.

Recommended/possible Styles:

- Perfectly written speech
- Just a few keywords
- Structural notes using symbols and abbreviations
- Combination of Keywords in the left column and structural notes on the right
- An empty sheet of paper
- ...

The crucial part in this talk is to sense the moment, when you finished collecting their ideas, and have discussed the advantages and maybe possible disadvantages. That is the moment when you switch from moderator to trainer and they rely on your tips and tricks, because you are the expert here and try to identify possible gaps in the results so far and fill in the gaps by sharing your knowledge.

- After this activity, they should be aware the most relevant different styles of debate notes including the advantages and disadvantages.

- It may be possible that your participants and you already came to the conclusion that different persons prefer different styles of notes – which is absolutely fine and should be encouraged by the trainer! There is reason to make every debater use the same system.

## **3. Exercise – Time for practical practice! (45 min)**

Having said that, it is necessary to give them time to find out on their own. Which leads us to this exercise: “We are going to test some of the different styles now. In order to do so, you will soon get a motion and some prep time. But before that, please choose two styles of notes, which you believe make sense for you to try and collect experience with.

Wait until everybody has decided (1 or 2 minutes)

## **4. Finish it! (15 min)**

“We come to the end of this workshop. For my personal evaluation I would like all of you to answer two questions: First, what did you learn today that you will use in your next debate? Second, is there something about your notes you are having problems with and that still is not being solved by this workshop?” (The second question is optional, so most participants might not answer it, which is ok. If someone comes up with a problem about note taking,

which is still unsolved, you can try to wrap it up by either collecting ideas from the group or helping with your personal expertise.)

### **C. Preparation**

- Read [...] – link to theory. Here, you can also add more links to other materials, if trainer is more curious.
- Prepare [...] – Find out, whether your room has blackboard, whiteboard, flipchart etc. and make sure you have appropriate markers or chalk
- Tipp: Preparing the headline of your visualization beforehand will save you time during the workshop!

I recommend to collect some real debate notes you can show around for inspiration purposes. Alternatively you can produce debate notes of different styles, thus making your workshop look more professional.

Provide for working material which is necessary for your exercise, in this case pens and paper

### **D. Hints**

Try to be realistic about the meaning of this workshop: It can happen to be the inspiration for a learning process which makes them much better debaters – but the learning process might take 20 to 100 debates. So this workshop is just the beginning of it.

It is different when your workshop helps them to avoid mistakes they used to make – in that case they would profit immediately!

### **E. Verification**

