

## Quarantine Exercises Collection

We all use exercises when we train debate, and we use the exercises for different purposes. Generally, a debate club, or a country organisation, has a stock of standard exercises, and increasing that stock is probably useful for everyone. So here is an attempt at collecting exercises from lots of different countries and describing them in one document.

The exercises are ordered by general topic area of what they train, although they often train more than one thing. Those things are mentioned as well. We also mention whether these exercises can be done individually, or with two people.

When picking exercises, it is probably useful to keep in mind what the purpose of the exercise is, and how to give feedback on the exercise (if at all) before you start including them in the training program. Exercises can often be tweaked to make them work exactly for your purpose.

Many of these exercises came from a session of the IDEA Debate Exchange, led by Anne Valkering.

### Speaking in public

Mostly about combating fear of public speaking, or getting used to standing in front of a group:

**Take a breath:** (Individual) explain that half of the fear of public speaking is about fearing to lose control in front of a crowd, show how slow and steady breathing can take that fear away, take a few breaths as a group (counting to 10 before they can exhale).

From then, give a 1 minute speech of one argument (and record this speech). Now, give the same speech, but take 1:30 minutes. Then, give the same speech again, but only in 45 seconds.

**If I were president/god/UN chief/etc:** Prepare your plans for when they were in a position of power, give them 30 secs or a minute. Alternatively, let them ask each other in pairs and have them introduce each other's plan to the group. This is about getting used to speaking in front of a group about nothing in particular.

**Random words:** have people speak about a random item (kettle, flip-flops, star, football) for 30 secs to a minute. Again, just to get used to speaking.

### Presentation skills/style

Presentation is about the verbal and non-verbal communication skills of a person, it covers facial expressions, use of hands and body, the tone, speed, volume and variation in a voice and how these things combine. These exercises help to increase speakers' control and awareness of

these parts of public speaking. They are meant to ensure everyone tries a range of styles to find the things that work for them.

**Assign mistakes: (two people)** write down a couple of common ticks, mistakes, other things that make a presentation style distracting. Each person picks one or two of these mistakes, and integrates them in their next speech. Makes people feel what the impact is of a particular mistake, and makes them see it in another person. You can also assign to specific people.

**Candid camera:** videotape someone giving a speech, point to the hand gestures, funny movements, how they impact.

**Gesture goals:** give people a goal for a gesture, by combining specific words with gestures, or specific moods. For example, say they need to spread out their right arm to make a wide gesture, when they are talking about a solution to a plan. Or that they need to show that they find something very important with specific hand gestures.

**Book on head:** have people give a speech with a book on their head. The speech ends when the book drops. Bit difficult in speeches where they take Poles so you should probably drop those.

**Uh:** whenever someone says uh, their turn in a game or speech or whatever ends.

**Sales pitch:** let people do a sales pitch about random objects, with a specific emotion in mind (happy, sad, angry). Comment on body language and use of voice. Either record yourself or have someone else listen.

**Emotional reading:** have people read poetry, lyrics, famous speeches, with different emotions in mind. Discuss how this worked for them and comment on body language and use of voice.

**Emotional speeching:** have people give a speech about a random topic with specific emotions in mind. Make them switch to another emotion halfway if the exercise goes well.

**Role speeching:** assign people a role before their speech. For example, they are pro on a motion about abortion, and they have been adopted, or they have undergone an abortion. Make them speak from that experience and emotion.

**Use of voice:** have people switch between speed, or volume, or tone while reading or giving a speech, so that they notice the effect.

**Simple sentence:** have people say a simple sentence multiple times with different volumes, speed, tone, or emotions. Have them repeat the attempt at these different states before moving on.

**Style assignments:** have people give short speeches in which they have to use a specific style element, like a hyperbole, repetition, alliteration (for stylistic devices, check [here](#) and [here](#))

**Examples:** have people, or groups figure out specific examples with different arguments. Then have them test that in debates or speeches. Discuss which ones work best.

## Structure

These exercises are about structuring speeches, but also a bit about structuring arguments. They help understand good structures, and help work out how to get to those structures. A lot is based on the model that is alternatively called SEXI(eR), SAIL or POIL: State Explain Illustrate (Relevance), State Argue, Illustrate, Link (I forgot the last one).

**Pick a comic character:** Have everyone pick a comic series character and argue why they picked that one. Then ask questions. Then have them write out the structure of that argument.

**Puzzle speeches:** take a former case or speech, cut up the pieces, have the other person put the speech or argument together in the most logical order

**Article analysis:** analyse an argumentative piece, an essay, a speech, or some other, and find out how the argument is structured. They give the statements, the arguments supporting that, the arguments supporting those arguments, the illustrations, etc. You will need to pre-check the articles, as they often lack clarity.

**Speech analysis:** have one person prepare a speech with arguments. The others listen and try to figure out the structure. They write what is a statement, an explanation, an illustration, etc. Discuss this with the speaker present (but silent apart from questions). Informative for the speaker to see what came across, and strengthens listening skills.

**Write a speech:** have them write out a full speech without giving it (can be in bullet points). Have them point out the structure (SEXleR or other)

**Combined Brainstorm:** have the group think up all the arguments for a particular motion. Then have them look at the arguments, and suggest how they can be linked and grouped together. Then see if we can make basic groups and order within each of these groups. For example: democracy is good, why? because of principles and efficiency, and then below principles we do things about equality, minority rights, human rights, etc. and under efficiency something about feedback loops, dictatorships' likelihood to become violent, or corrupt, etc.

## Argumentation

This is linked to structure a lot, and a number of the exercises mentioned there can work just as easily here. There are a number of other things, however, that fall under argumentation: what makes good arguments, what makes analysis stronger, and when to stop digging deeper, for example. Arguments can cover factual statements, reasons why something is right or good and reasons why something works in a certain way (policy, moral and analysis debates, in non-correct order). Statements here state "why this is true" when in fact, the argumentation can cover other things as well.

**I completely disagree:** one person makes a statement and argues that case, the next person has to disagree and argue why, the next person either starts with a new statement, or, if they think they can add new stuff, argue the opposite case again.

**Refutation game:** one person makes an argument, the next person refutes and gives a new argument, the next person refutes that and gives a new argument. Stop when no one has new arguments.

**Play the 3-year old:** have people provide an argument, ask why until they cannot go further, or have to answer with "that's just how it is/that's just true/that's an established fact"

**Judges freeze:** have the other speaker interrupt the debate when they need a speaker to present a particular argument, deepen it, or refute something. Or when they need clarification. A bit of an extreme version of raising your hand.

**Refutation block:** stop a debate when an argument has not been rebutted. Do not use when teams already do a fair amount of rebuttal.

**Analyse debates:** pick a final or strong debate in a major competition and analyse the argumentation and how it moves with your group.

**Repeat (1,2,3):** do a speech of 1 minute, analyse with feedback, then do a speech of 2 minutes to consider the feedback, repeat the process once more and do a speech of 3 minutes (times can of course differ).

**4 ways:** do the same argument in four different ways (in terms of structure, proofs, examples, etc). See what works best.

**Crazy motions:** have people debate about things that are obviously untrue or unworkable. Make sure they develop their arguments correctly.

**No knowledge motions:** have people debate about things they cannot know anything about. Make sure they develop their arguments correctly.

## Strategy

Strategy is a bag full of different things, but involves: how to define cases well, how to deal with the strongest and weakest teams in your debate, how to remain relevant throughout the debate,

**Open motions:** use motions that indicate a topic area, but not the direction (THW do something about the Euro), or a general direction but no topic area (THW go green). One person preps the Prime Minister, the other the Leader of Opposition. PM needs to think well about how to define the debate in a conventional manner. Leader of Opposition needs to think hard about how to best fit their ideas in an impromptu manner into the debate as it plays out.

**No notes debates:** do a debate but do not allow people to use pen and paper. Makes people listen better to the debate and focus on the most important bits on either side.

**Second half choices:** tell the debaters what a motion was, have them prep for second half, then watch a first recorded half of the debate, and run an extension.

## Miscellaneous

These are exercises for all sorts of things, including pois, brainstorming, creativity and in-depth analysis

**Building cases together:** You prepare both the opp and the prop side. Then roles are randomly assigned and each of you gets 5 minutes to prepare a speech. This creates a level playing field, and allows for strength of strategy, prebuttal and rebuttal to show.

**Iron-manning:** if you really want to stretch people's ability to say new stuff and think of new arguments to the maximum, have the two of you ironman a first half or a full BP debate. Tiring, but definitely interesting.

**No prep debates:** give a motion and have them debate straightaway. Teaches thinking on your feet and creativity. Motions need to be clear and closed for this to work.

**No prep motions:** instead of actual debates, you give people a few minutes to look at a motion and then they need to say which arguments they would pick as the strongest argument. Discuss.

**Brainstorm deadlines:** set times at which different tasks for the prep time need to be fulfilled (like, have a plan after 3 mins, have the basic structure after 10 mins, have arguments and examples after 13 mins, think off start and finish at 15 mins, for the first speaker anyways)

**Summary prep:** ask people to prepare the basic questions they assume will be present in a debate as a summary speech before the debate has started. Then make sure to tell them never to use this structure for their summary unless the arguments were actually present. Also, that they can use this technique to think of a good first half case as well.

**Info sheets:** have one person prepare a short introduction to a theme or an info sheet. Then have a motion that is related to the info sheet, either straightforwardly or in a sideways related manner (say the sheet is about nuclear energy, then either debate building new nuclear energy plants or debate about doing more green/renewable energy sources). Teaches how to make use of factual knowledge in a debate and how to do this creatively.

#### **Argumentation and problem solving in fairy tales.**

For example, a British fairy tale „Jack and the beanstalk“. After reading a fairy tale, discussion is opened and critical questions for the discussion are found, e.g. “Did Jack do the right thing when he took the gold, the hen and the harp?” It must be admitted that almost each fairy tale has a problem highlighted, which can be debated.

**Finding arguments in historical speeches.** Historical speeches are valuable not only because of their historical significance but also because of their content. For instance, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1940-1955) Winston Churchill’s speech contains persuasive arguments. Students find out arguments in speeches, analyse and evaluate them. They can refute them. Then students create their own arguments, pretending being in the shoes of the person who has delivered the speech.

#### **“The critical debate”**

Find a motion where you (or your partner) have strong views on one side of the debate. Then develop the other side for 15 minutes. Discuss whether your views have changed, what you’ve learned to appreciate in the other side’s case.

Important: The implementation of this activity definitely promotes tolerance.

#### **Team Prep**

You give each other a resolution and a side to prepare. After you’ve prepared the resolution, you give feedback on each other’s arguments, and prepare the other side. Make this a weekly routine.