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## **Muslim Youth Debate Tournament Workshop – Tournament Tips**

### **Tournament Preparation**

- Prepare arguments
  - Think about the topics and understand the concepts and issues.
  - Make an outline of your arguments – both prop and opp. The outline should fit on one page, both sides.
  - Learn your arguments well.
  - Re-write the arguments in your own words so you understand them.
- Think of refutations
  - Think of refutations to your arguments and any of the major arguments that can come up.
- Pre-assign your speakers (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>) and stick to the assignments so that each speaker can specialize for that role.
- Practice with your team using Google Hangout or in-person.
  - Discuss potential refutations with your teammates.
  - Do speeches and discuss arguments and how each teammate will tie in with the other.
- Do a couple of mock debates, if possible, with another team.
- Practice timing your speech.
  - Each teammate should know which speech she or he will do (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>) and should practice the timing of her or his speeches (5 or 3 minutes).
  - Timing of your speeches is an important factor in the individual speaking awards.

- Have a nice dinner (with carbs – rice or pasta) and get to bed early the night before the tournament.

### During the Tournament

- Before each speech, state the Basmala (saying “Bismillah”) in your heart, ask for Allah’s help, and make your intention for Allah (i.e. not to win the debate for your ego but to serve Allah through your debate skills).
- Each speaker should begin by reciting the speech du’a (Rabbi Shrah’li sadri, wa yas-sir li amri, wah lul ukhdatul min-lissani yafkahu qaoli), then stating – “Respected guests, honored judges, and worthy opponents, As Salaamu Alaikum...”
- The 1<sup>st</sup> speaker of the proposition should begin by stating her or his definition of the motion, e.g. “The motion before the house is...Representing the proposition, we agree with the motion. We define the motion as...”. Then introduce your argument with an overarching theme before going into your individual arguments.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> speaker of the opposition should begin by re-stating the proposition’s definition, e.g., “The proposition has defined the motion as...Representing the opposition, we strongly disagree with this statement”.
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> speakers should do refutations in the 1<sup>st</sup> minute, when POIs are prohibited.
- Make sure you refute each of your opponent’s arguments.
- Keep your speech well organized, so that the judge does not get confused. Every time you make a new argument, say so, e.g., “my first argument is...my next argument is...” or “my first argument is...my second argument is...”
- In many cases, the other side will have great arguments – but they will not be related to the motion or the definition of the motion provided by proposition. Don’t let this slide! When its your turn to speak, tell the judges, “our friends on the other side have come up with some excellent arguments – the only problem is that they have nothing to do with the motion!”
- **Take good notes!** Without notes, you will not be able to refute all their arguments.

- At the top of your notes page, write in simple language what side you are arguing (e.g. “STEM should be prioritized” or “STEM should not be prioritized”).
- **Manage your time!** Watch your clock!! Its better to finish before time than to not finish your speech. Bring a digital watch or cell phone with a stopwatch with you so that you can manage your time.
- Your opponents will be nervous and will make mistakes – **look out for the mistakes they make and call them out** – for example: (a) if they are on proposition and they don’t define the motion, tell the judge that and give your own definition when you go up to speak; or, (b) if they don’t respond to one of your arguments, state that they didn’t respond to that argument so you assume they agree with you.
- The proposition holds the burden of proving the motion.
- The opposition must show that the proposition’s case is wrong.
- If you are on the opposition side, you may have to adjust your prepared arguments based on the proposition’s definition. The basic argument should hold, just make appropriate adjustments.
- If speaking, don’t take more than 3 POIs.
- If your team is not speaking, ask at least 3 POIs.
- Make answers to POIs quick and snappy – don’t let POIs distract you.
- If you don’t immediately know how to respond to a POI, say “Good point, let me get back to you...” then continue with your speech and respond to the POI later.
- If you still can’t think of an answer, then (like politicians) don’t answer the question directly, but respond with a general answer directed to the broader topic of the question. In other words, just say something that comes to your mind about the general topic of the POI and move on.
- The final speaker has the important task of summarizing their refutations to the oppositions’ main arguments and their own main arguments and tying everything together to show without doubt that their side is right and the other side is wrong. You only have 3 minutes so stick to the main arguments.

- The final speaker on the proposition side will also have to refute refutations of the opposition which the 2<sup>nd</sup> proposition did not have an opportunity to address.
- The final speaker should begin her or his speech with a thesis statement of the main concept of their case, e.g., “As we have shown, STEM education should be prioritized because of the great benefits STEM education brings to the student and to society-at-large”
- The final speaker should remind the judges of all their arguments that the other side did not refute and should tell the judges that she assumes the other side agrees with them on those arguments since they offered no refutation.
- **Stress is your friend** – if managed properly, stress will push you to achieve peak performance in the tournament.
- If you have any shot at being selected for the semi-final round, go over your notes during the lunch break
- For the impromptu debates, come up with real world examples and focus on refutations.
- Review the debate rules and rubrics on the [debate.mafiq.org](http://debate.mafiq.org) website.
- Bring snacks and energy bars to the tournament – lunch will be provided.
- Don’t forget to **relax and have fun!** You guys have fun during our regular debate sessions...this will be no different.