

# LANGUAGE FOR DEBATES

## Vocabulary – Technical Language

*Debating is an important part of academic (not to mention non-academic) life- indeed giving and supporting your ideas is something you will have to use in your oral exams and outside of the academic context! Even the most brilliant idea won't go far if it can't be well explained and defended! This guide provides both intermediate and advanced vocabulary and phrases, how to rebuttal your opponents, as well as how to support your reasons.*

### Stating an opinion

- In my opinion...
- The way I see it...
- If you want my honest opinion....
- According to Lisa...

### Asking for an opinion

- What's your idea?
- What are your thoughts on all of this?
- How do you feel about that?
- What do you think?
- Do you agree?

### Expressing agreement

- I agree with you 100 percent.
- I couldn't agree with you more.
- That's so true.
- That's for sure.
- **(slang)** Tell me about it!
- You're absolutely right.
- Absolutely.
- No doubt about it.
- **(agree with negative statement)** Me neither.
- **(weak)** I suppose so./I guess so.

### Interruptions

- Can I add something here?
- Is it okay if I jump in for a second?
- If I might add something...
- Can I throw my two cents in?
- Sorry to interrupt, but...
- **(after accidentally interrupting someone)** Sorry, go ahead. **OR** Sorry, you were saying...
- **(after being interrupted)** You didn't let me finish.

### Settling an argument

- Let's just move on, shall we?
- Let's drop it.
- I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.
- **(sarcastic)** Whatever you say./If you say so.

## Expressing disagreement

- I don't think so.
- **(strong)** No way.
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- **(strong)** I totally disagree.
- I beg to differ.
- **(strong)** I'd say the exact opposite.
- Not necessarily.
- That's not always true.
- That's not always the case.
- No, I'm not so sure about that.

## Giving Support for Your Reasons

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Support consists of evidence. The four kinds of evidence, adapted from LeBeau, Harrington, Lubetsky (2000), are:

- **Example:** from your own experience or from what you heard or read.
- **Common Sense:** things that you believe everybody knows.
- **Expert Opinion:** the opinions of experts -- this comes from research.
- **Statistics:** numbers -- this also comes from research.

Smoking should be banned in all public places.

### **Example: For example / for instance / let me give an example**

Whenever I go to a restaurant or bar and there are people smoking near me, I feel that I am breathing their smoke. This makes me a smoker even though I don't want to be.

### **Common Sense: Everyone knows / if...then / it's common knowledge that**

Secondhand smoke is very unhealthy for nonsmokers.

### **Statistics:**

Secondhand smoke causes about 250,000 respiratory infections in infants and children every year, resulting in about 15,000 hospitalizations each year.

### **Expert Opinion: According to.../ to quote.../ the book \_\_\_\_\_ says...**

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "secondhand smoke causes approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers each year."

## Four Step Rebuttal

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- **STEP 1: "They say ..."**
  - State the argument that you are about to refute so that the judges can follow easily. Take notes during your opponent's speeches so you will be clear about what they argued.
    - **"The other team said that** smoking is harmful for nonsmokers."
- **STEP 2: "But I disagree..." Or "That may be true, but..."**
  - **"That may be true, but** I think that if nonsmokers want to avoid cigarette smoke, they can walk away from it."
- **STEP 3: "Because ..."**
  - **"Because** nonsmokers should look out for their own health."
- **STEP 4: "Therefore..."**
  - **"Therefore** it is not the responsibility of smokers to protect nonsmokers."

## Advanced Language

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### **"I'm listening to the other side."**

- I see your point, but I think...
- Yes, I understand, but my opinion is that...
- That's all very interesting, but the problem is that...
- I'm afraid I can't quite agree with your point.
- I think I've got your point, now let me respond to it.
- We can see what you're saying. Here's my reply...

### **"I need to say something now." (only through the chair though!)**

- I'm sorry to interrupt, but you've misunderstood our point.
- Excuse me, but that's not quite correct.
- Sorry, I just have to disagree with your point.
- Let me just respond to that, please.
- Forgive me for interrupting, but I must respond to that.
- Hold on a moment, that's not correct.
- If you would allow me to add a comment here...
- If you don't mind, I'd like to take issue with what you just said.

### **"You haven't replied yet."**

- We said that... but the other side has not replied to our point.
- I'd like to focus on two points that the other side has failed to address.
- There are two points that we have succeeded in establishing...
- I want to call your attention to an important point that our opponents have not addressed yet.
- I'd like to point out that there are two issues our opponents have failed to dispute, namely...
- I must stress again that our point has not been refuted by the other side.

### **"Well, I think that..."**

- The first point I would like to raise is this...
- Our position is the following...
- Here's the main point I want to raise...
- I'd like to deal with two points here. The first is...



- Our opponents have still not addressed the question we raised a moment ago...
- The other side has failed to answer our point about...
- Notice that the other side has not addressed our main point.
- Let me just restate my position.
- Just to be clear, here is what I mean...

**“So finally, we...”**

- To sum up, here are the main points our opponents have not addressed...
- We pointed out that...
- Our opponents have claimed that...
- To recap the main points...
- Let’s sum up where we stand in this debate.
- Let me summarize our position in this debate.
- In summary, we want to point out that...
- Let’s see which arguments are still standing.
- Let’s take stock of where we are in this debate.