



FUNDAMENTAL ARGUMENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE EDUCATION

International Middle School Debate Tournament

Debate Rulebook
April 2024



Contents

1 Rules.....	1
2 Order of speakers.....	2-3
3 Case.....	4-6
4 Speaker roles.....	7-12
5 Cross-examination.....	13-14
6 Judging.....	14-18

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1 Rules

Debate is a structured discussion that relies on argumentation between the proposition (government) and the opposition side. At this debate tournament, we are following a modified version of the Karl Popper debate format.

Each side is composed of three members. The proposition and opposition sides are given a motion that they will debate. The focus of any debate in this format should be on the values that each side stands for. This means that the debates should focus more on why a motion should be proposed/opposed, and not necessarily on how exactly will the motion be carried out.

A judge will decide the winner of the debate and explain their decision after the debate. The judge will also guide the debaters throughout the debate by briefly reminding the debaters of the rules before the debate, calling upon debaters before their speech, telling debaters how much thinking time they have remaining and keeping track of the time left in each speech.

2 Order of speakers

The debate is composed of: speeches, cross-examinations and thinking time.

Speeches are part of the debate in which a debater can speak uninterrupted for a certain amount of time. The first proposition speech (A1) and the first opposition speech last 5 minutes. The second proposition speech (A2), second opposition speech (N2), third proposition speech (A3) and third opposition speech (N3) all last 4 minutes. What team member will hold each speech is decided by the debaters at the beginning of the debate.

Cross-examinations last 2 minutes during which the speaker is asked questions by a member of the other side.

Finally, each side has 8 minutes of **thinking time** that they can use throughout the debate before their speeches. Debaters can use this time to prepare their speeches and talk with their teammates. They are free to distribute their thinking time as they wish, but the total time can't be more than 8 minutes.

Part of Debate	Duration
First proposition speech (A1)	5 min
Opposition thinking time	Opposition decides how long*
Third opposition speaker (N3) cross-examines the first proposition speaker (A1)N3 → A1	2 min
Opposition thinking time	Opposition decides how long*
First opposition speech (N1)	5 min
Proposition thinking time	Proposition decides how long*
Third proposition speaker (A3) cross-examines the first opposition speaker (N1)A3 → N1	2 min
Proposition thinking time	Proposition decides how long*
Second proposition speech (A2)	4 min
Opposition thinking time	Opposition decides how long*
First opposition speaker (N1) cross-examines the second proposition speaker (A2)N1 → A2	2 min
Opposition thinking time	Opposition decides how long*
Second opposition speech (N2)	4 min
Proposition thinking time	Proposition decides how long*
First proposition speaker (A1) cross-examines the second opposition the second opposition speaker (N2)A1 → N2	2 min
Proposition thinking time	Proposition decides how long
Third proposition speech (A3)	4 min
Opposition thinking time	Opposition decides how long*
Third opposition speech (N3)	4 min

***For thinking time, each side has 8 minutes spread out throughout the entire debate**

3 Case

Motion

A motion is a statement that can be affirmed and negated. Facts cannot be motions; for example, the sentence "The sun is a star" cannot be a motion because there is no way to dispute (negate) that claim.

There are two types of debate motions depending on how much preparation time is given to debaters.

Prepared motions are motions that are announced weeks before the tournament. Debaters are encouraged to use all available resources and help in preparing their case for the prepared motion.

Ad hoc (impromptu) motions are motions that debaters will receive one hour before the debate. Debaters are expected to come up with their case (definition, arguments, etc.) on their own. This means that during the preparation for ad hoc motions, debaters must not use any sources of knowledge (internet, textbooks, encyclopedias, etc.) or seek assistance from other debate teams or their coaches.

Definitions

The proposition side is responsible for defining the words in the motion in order to have a fair debate. A definition is a clear explanation of a concept. In a debate, the proposition is expected to define important keywords in the motion, especially terms for which there is a possibility that debaters and the judge do not understand them the same way. The fundamental roles of a definition are to clarify meaning, eliminate ambiguity, and remove uncertainty. In other words, through definitions, we aim to avoid misunderstandings and explain what the debate is about. The definition must be accurate, fair, and objectively explained. The meaning of words should be determined reasonably, considering the context of the debate.

The opposition is responsible for correcting the definition set by proposition if they consider them to be unfair or limiting the debate.

Arguments

An argument is a reasoned and supported claim used to prove something. In the context of debate, an argument is the answer to the question "Why should we propose/oppose the motion?" An argument consists of:

Claim (premise) - The claim is a sentence that answers the question "Why should we propose/oppose the motion?" It should contain the main idea of the argument.

Explanation - The part of the argument that provides a theoretical explanation proving the truthfulness and importance of the argument.

Evidence - Research, statistical data, examples, etc., that prove the argument and demonstrate its truthfulness and relevance in reality.

Link - The part of the argument that connects the argument to what it proves; the argument must be connected to the motion. In other words, how is this argument relevant to the motion?

4 Speaker Roles

Each speaker in a debate has a specific role.

Debaters can change positions between rounds of the competition (i.e., in each new debate), but not during the course of the debate.

FIRST PROPOSITION SPEAKER (A1)

In this speech, the proposition team should present the entire argumentation in favor of the motion. Although subsequent affirmative speakers can repeat and expand upon arguments during the debate, the first affirmative speaker must present the affirmative argumentation line in its entirety, including all definitions and arguments that the team deems necessary. In other words, the A1 speaker outlines the case of their team.

During cross-examination, the third opposition speaker examines the first proposition speaker, and the first proposition speaker examines the second opposition speaker.

FIRST OPPOSITION SPEAKER (N1)

The main role of the opposition team is to refute (challenge) the proposition's debate case. The first opposition speaker begins by refuting the affirmative case. Subsequent opposition speakers must not introduce new refutations but only build upon the refutation (improve, provide more detailed explanations, introduce new examples, etc.) initiated by the first opposition speaker. Consistency in strategy is crucial for the opposition team. All elements of the proposition debate case (definitions and arguments) that the first opposition speaker does not challenge are considered accepted and remain valid in the debate (thus contributing to the proposition side's victory).

Additionally, the first opposition speaker must present all elements of the opposition debate case: definitions (if not presented by the affirmative or if the negative team wishes to challenge them) and argument(s).

During cross-examination, the third proposition speaker examines the first opposition speaker, and the first opposition speaker examines the second proposition speaker.

SECOND PROPOSITION SPEAKER (A2)

In this speech, the proposition team has two tasks. First, they must defend their debate case, i.e., respond to refutations (i.e., opposition's objections to the proposition argumentation line). If the proposition speaker does not respond to certain objections, it means that the proposition side agrees with them. Second, they must attack the opposition debate case, i.e., present their refutations to the opposition's arguments. If a speaker does not refute a specific point of the opposition argumentation line, it remains standing (thus contributing to the opposition side's victory). Also, attention should be paid if the first negative opposition fails to address a certain part of the proposition case.

The second proposition speaker should strengthen their existing arguments with additional explanations and examples.

During cross-examination, the first opposition speaker examines the second proposition speaker, and the second proposition speaker does not examine anyone.

SECOND OPPOSITION SPEAKER (N2)

The tasks of this speech are analogous to the tasks of the second proposition speech: first, the speaker must continue to attack the proposition argumentation line, and second, they must respond to proposition refutations of the opposition debate case.

At this point in the debate, the opposition speaker can start drawing attention to points that the proposition team has missed. This means pointing out areas to which the proposition has not responded. It is considered that the proposition has agreed to these missed points. The second opposition speaker should strengthen their existing arguments with additional explanations and examples.

During cross-examination, the first proposition speaker examines the second opposition speaker, and the second opposition speaker does not examine anyone.

THIRD PROPOSITION SPEAKER (A3)

The third proposition speaker must not introduce new content that has not been presented in the debate until then. New evidence for existing arguments is allowed only if it comes as a response to new content from the second opposition speaker or if the proposition side has learned something significant during the immediate preceding cross-examination. The task of the third proposition speaker is to identify the main conflicts in the debate, explain why these are the most significant conflicts, analyze what happened during the debate regarding these conflicts, and explain how their team was better in these conflicts, i.e., how the conflicts were resolved in favor of their side.

No one examines the third proposition speaker, and they examine the first opposition speaker.

THIRD OPPOSITION SPEAKER (N3)

The tasks of the third opposition speaker are analogous to those of the third proposition speaker. The third opposition speaker must not introduce new content since the proposition side does not have the opportunity to respond to it. They also identify the main conflicts, explain them, analyze them, and demonstrate why their team was better in each of these conflicts.

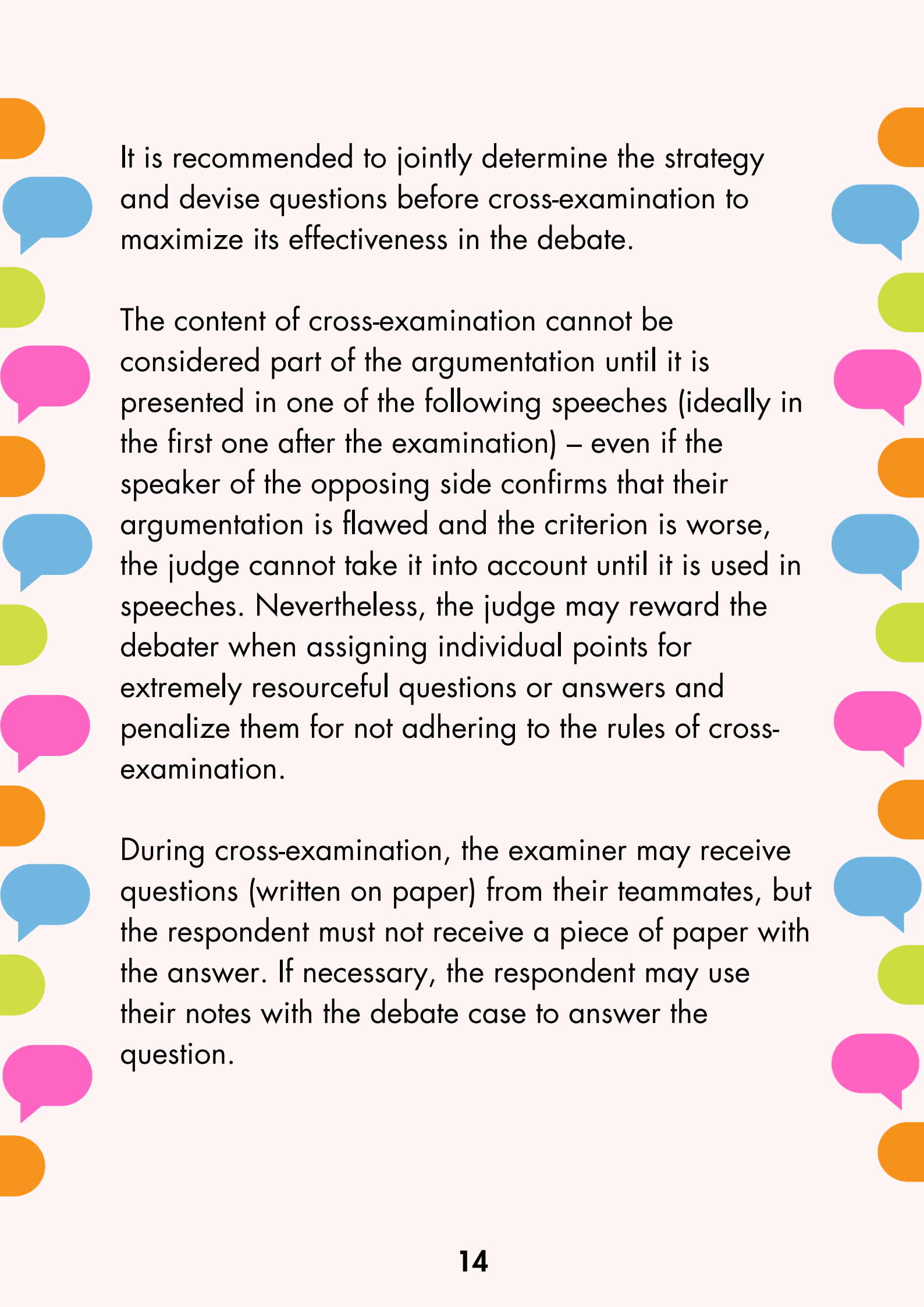
No one examines the third opposition speaker, and they examine the first proposition speaker.

To participate effectively in the debate, all debaters must listen carefully to the speakers and take notes during their speeches. A typical way of taking notes is the so-called flow, where we divide the paper into 6 columns and write down the most important ideas and parts of the case presented by each speaker. It is important that debaters can navigate their notes and use them to prepare attacks or defenses.

5 Cross-examination

Cross-examination is conducted between speeches, and debaters have the opportunity to ask questions to the opposing team, which will later serve them in the debate. The debater conducting the examination should ask questions, not give a speech. The debater being examined should answer those questions, not give a speech or ask counter-questions. Cross-examination serves several key functions:

- Clarifying the opponent's arguments, definitions, examples. If you haven't followed the course of the opponent's presentation well, this is a good opportunity to inquire about anything missed.
- Encouraging the opponent to take a stand on a particular position. Debaters always leave some room for balancing in their presentations. It is up to the examiner to prompt the opponent to publicly "acknowledge" what works in your favor.
- Pointing out flaws in the opponent's argumentation line. One way to make use of the time allocated for cross-examination is to expose, through carefully crafted questions, the flaws in the opposing line.



It is recommended to jointly determine the strategy and devise questions before cross-examination to maximize its effectiveness in the debate.

The content of cross-examination cannot be considered part of the argumentation until it is presented in one of the following speeches (ideally in the first one after the examination) – even if the speaker of the opposing side confirms that their argumentation is flawed and the criterion is worse, the judge cannot take it into account until it is used in speeches. Nevertheless, the judge may reward the debater when assigning individual points for extremely resourceful questions or answers and penalize them for not adhering to the rules of cross-examination.

During cross-examination, the examiner may receive questions (written on paper) from their teammates, but the respondent must not receive a piece of paper with the answer. If necessary, the respondent may use their notes with the debate case to answer the question.

6 Judging

A couple of key notes for judges:

- The KP format is a value-based format - it is situated in an ideal world
- The judge is a "*tabula rasa*" - they accept the presented arguments as true unless refuted by the opposition during the debate
- A low point win is possible - the winning side in the debate may have fewer points than the losing side

Total points range from 18 to 30:

29-30 Excellent/Fantastic
27-28 Exceptionally Good
25-26 Very Good
24 Average
22-23 Satisfactory
20-22 Passing
18-19 Significant Improvement Needed

Individual point categories are: Argumentation (0-6), Presentation (0-4) Organization (0-2)

Argumentation (0-6)

Scoring in this area includes assessing the quality of the case. This involves explanations of arguments, the use of examples, and the success in connecting arguments, examples and motion together.

Furthermore, argumentation includes the quality of refutations, i.e., whether the refutations are logical, well-explained, and properly directed. Questions guiding the assessment of individual points for argumentation are:

- Are all necessary parts of the motion defined?
- Does this make the debate understandable?
- Is the relevance of arguments explained?
- Did the arguments have all the parts? (claim, explanation, support, connection to criterion and thesis)
- Are they well-explained?
- Do the arguments make sense/are they logical?
- Are they important for the debate/related to the thesis/within the scope of the thesis?
- Can it be clearly concluded which fundamental ideas the speaker supports?

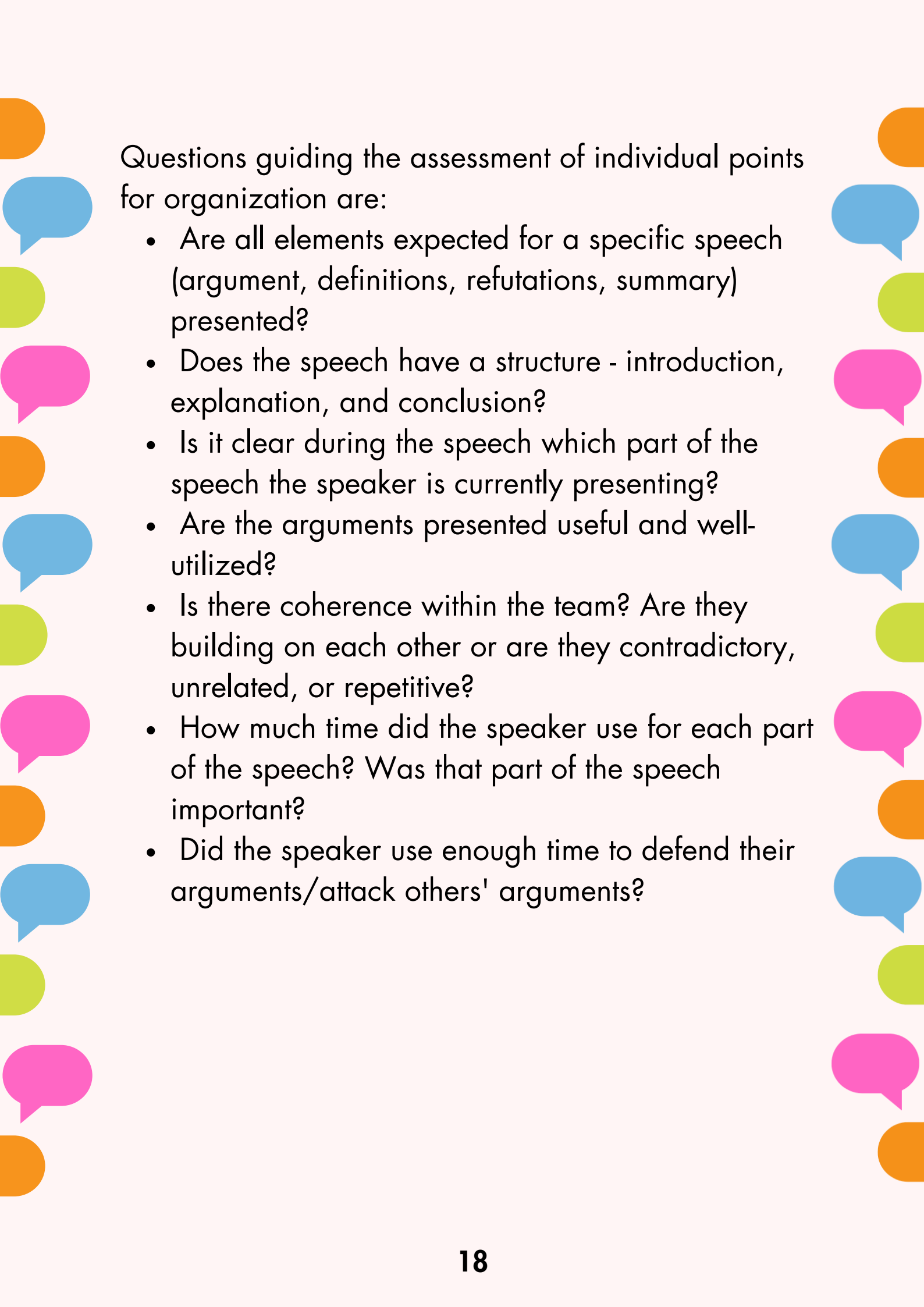
When assessing argumentation, we rely on our own judgment, as well as on the attacks and arguments made by the opposition.

Presentation (0-4)

Points in this area include style and manner of speaking, i.e., whether the speaker was convincing in how they presented their argumentation and refutations. This involves elements such as speech speed, volume, emphasis on certain words and sentences, eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, movement during the speech, etc. In this category, language abilities such as regional accent, level of proficiency in a foreign language, or pronunciation issues should not be evaluated.

Organization (0-2)

Organization encompasses multiple elements. First is fulfilling the role of the speaker, i.e., whether the speaker had all the elements expected for their speech according to the rules. Second is the structure of the speech, which refers to whether the speech has an introduction, explanation, and conclusion, whether the arguments and refutations are presented in a clear and meaningful order, and whether the speaker emphasizes which part of their speech they are currently presenting. Additionally, organization includes timing of the speech, i.e., whether the speaker allocates time in a meaningful way considering the relevance of the content to the debate.



Questions guiding the assessment of individual points for organization are:

- Are all elements expected for a specific speech (argument, definitions, refutations, summary) presented?
- Does the speech have a structure - introduction, explanation, and conclusion?
- Is it clear during the speech which part of the speech the speaker is currently presenting?
- Are the arguments presented useful and well-utilized?
- Is there coherence within the team? Are they building on each other or are they contradictory, unrelated, or repetitive?
- How much time did the speaker use for each part of the speech? Was that part of the speech important?
- Did the speaker use enough time to defend their arguments/attack others' arguments?