

## Notes on Self-Improvement and Drills in Debating

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[Based on a session by Anna \(Debate Coach, Glasgow Techon Debate Society\)](#)

### 1. General Principles for Improvement

- Gradual Progress:
  - Improvement requires consistent effort over time.
  - Avoid expecting instant results; focus on incremental growth.
- **Mental Health Balance:**
  - Avoid burnout by pacing yourself.
  - Accept imperfection: Even top debaters have bad rounds.

### 2. Effective Use of Debate Rounds

- **Feedback Strategies:**
  - Always seek feedback after rounds (even post-competition).
  - Ask specific questions (e.g., “How could I move up one rank?”, “What should I cut/add to my speech?”).
  - Request actionable tips (e.g., “What would you have run in this round?”).
  - Prioritize feedback from panel judges if applicable.
- **Role Flexibility:**
  - Switch roles (e.g., A1 vs. A2) to understand your partner’s challenges.
  - Practice with diverse partners to gain new perspectives.
- **Focused Practice:**
  - Dedicate rounds to one skill (e.g., engagement, rebuttals).
  - Write goals on your notes (e.g., “Focus on weighing”).

### 3. Prep Drills

- Types of Prep Sessions:
  - Partner Preps: Analyze motions, strategize extensions, and reflect.
  - Coach/Observed Preps: Have a coach watch your prep to identify gaps (e.g., missing engagement, weak analysis).
  - Motion-Specific Drills: Break down motions (e.g., economy, philosophy) deeply.
  - Path-to-Victory Prep: Strategize winning a round with one strong case.
- Post-Prep Work:
  - Watch recorded debates on the same motion to compare strategies.
  - Reflect on gaps (e.g., “Why didn’t I think of that example?”).

### 4. Feedback & Tracking

- Feedback Tips:
  - Track recurring issues (e.g., poor engagement, weak weighing).

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- Ask judges: “What should I preserve in my speech?”\* to highlight strengths.
- Tracking Progress:
  - Use a notebook or spreadsheet to log feedback and goals.
  - Set specific, measurable objectives (e.g., “Improve case framing in 2 weeks”).

## **5. Knowledge Building**

### **- Case Files:**

- Create concise, debate-focused notes on topics (e.g., economics, IR).
- Use past motions to build adaptable arguments.

### **- Consume Resources:**

- Read (The Economist), listen to podcasts, watch debates.
- Focus on weak areas (e.g., philosophy, technical policy).

## **6. Judging Improvement**

- Practice Giving Oral Feedback (OA):
  - Simulate chairing rounds to build confidence.
  - Ask for feedback on panel discussions (e.g., clarity, engagement).
- Track Judging Weaknesses
  - Note recurring issues (e.g., unclear tracking, poor panel communication).

## **7. Mindset & Fun**

- Stay Motivated:
  - Balance hard work with fun rounds/lighthearted motions.
  - Take breaks to avoid burnout.
- Collaborate:
  - Work with coaches, partners, and peers to stay inspired.

**Key Takeaway:** Improvement in debating is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on specific skills, seek targeted feedback, and maintain a growth mindset. Track progress, stay curious, and remember to enjoy the process!

### **Example Drill:**

- Rebuttal-Focused Round: Spend 7 minutes solely on rebuttals. Ask the chair: “Which rebuttals were most/least effective?”