

A very challenging aspect of debating is listening, which is essential to do well if one wants to be successful in competitions. To improve your listening skills, it is helpful to remember the following strategies:

- 1) **Use a Notebook.** While taking notes during a debate, we recommend that you bring a regular sized notebook, open the notebook so you have a blank page on either side, and draw a horizontal line from the left to the right across the middle of both pages. On the top left, write the Prime Minister (PM) and on the bottom left, the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM); on the top right, write Leader of the Opposition (LO) and on the bottom left, write Deputy Leader of the Opposition (DLO). If you are participating in a British Parliament debate, you will need to divide each page into four sections.

- 2) **Taking Notes.** When taking notes, you should record the Claims and the Evidence that are delivered by the opposing side; you should also record the Claims, Evidence and Refutations of your partner, which you may need, depending on your role in the debate, when you do your Restatement or the Rebuttal speech. Doing so, also keeps your mind focused during the round. Remember, your notes should be brief, so you should only write phrases that assist you to remember the concept.

- 3) **Listening with Intention.** It is not possible to anticipate the Evidence that the speaker uses in an argument, but you can anticipate the Claim. Therefore, before and during the debate round, you should try to anticipate the Claims of the speaker because such *listening with intention* will help you to assess the quality of the Claims and be alerted to the Evidence, which usually comes right after the Claim.

- 4) **Reviewing the Content.** After a speech, and before the next speech begins, you should quickly review your notes because ideas will be lingering in your mind, so you may wish to add words and phrases to clarify the content. You can also assess the content by highlighting, for example, in green those

phrases with which you agree and in red those phrases with which you disagree. You may also briefly write why you disagree.

5) **Making Connections.** After several speakers, you should try to make connections between concepts. To do this, you should look for repetition among the Claims between the first and second speakers on the opposing side. Noticing such repetition helps you assess the quality of their arguments. Also, you should assess how their refutations relate to the Claims of you and your partner. To do this, you could draw lines across the page from one concept to another, which visually makes a connection between the refutations and claims and on which you can make a comment.