

University of St Andrews

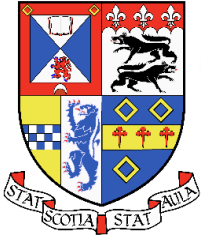
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Union Debating Society

The University of St Andrews
Union Debating Society

The
Bluffer's Guide
To Debate
Traditions



The Bluffers Guide to Debate Traditions

Procession: At the start of the debate, the Board and table speakers process into the chamber, led by the Serjeant-At-Arms.

Serjeant-At-Arms: The first officer to appear at a debate who will call the house to rise. The Serjeant is responsible for keeping order in the house and protecting the Convenor. Members should be aware that the sword (called Bessie) is not just ceremonial and may be used for maintaining discipline in the chamber.

Reading of the minutes: Each debate opens with the reading of the minutes of the last debate. However, all too often, the clerk is interrupted by some heckler. A vote will be taken by oral acclamation (no one votes aye, the impressions are great). The Convenor will overrule the house and will rightly be called on to resign.

Oral Acclamation: Traditionally, when the outcome of a vote is not crucial, it is taken by oral acclamation. This announcement is met by cries of “ooo” from the floor. Those in favour shout “aye!” when asked, and those against should “nay!”. This is usually taken before the reading of the minutes.

How Much: The Societies long-standing reputation for providing excellent value for money is reflected by the habit of the audience challenging any figure with a cry of “How Much” when the sum is repeated they reply “That’s Cheap!”

Installation of the Convenor: A yearly event when the newly elected Convenor is placed in their chair. This usually takes the forms of several board members carrying the convenor elect, who feigns great discomfort at being given the prestigious role.

Points of Information: A device by which a speaker may seek to interrupt his opponent’s speech, in theory to offer relative information or to correct a point of fact, in reality to reveal an opponents ignorance or to make a crack at their expense. POI’s should be offered by rising covered.

Points of Order: These may be offered to the Convenor by any member of the House at any time and may not be ignored. Points of Order should relate directly to the standing orders (rules of the house, found in the weekly order paper) and should never be used as a cheap way of offering a POI.

Schools Debates: The society’s schools outreach program runs debating training sessions in local schools. The schools’ program culminates in the annual St Andrews Schools debating competition and is led by the Schools Secretary.



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The Board of Ten: The Executive Committee of the Union Debating Society, tasked with managing the societies finances, image and strategic direction.

Competitive Debating Board: Lead by the Chief Whip, the committee is tasked with organising all things competitive at the society.

Public Events Board: Lead by the Chair of Ways and Means, the committee is tasked with planning all of the society's public debates and socials.

Convenor's Chair: A Remnant of 1645 when the Scottish Parliament met in Lower Parliament Hall, the Convenors Chair (and not the Convenor, whatever they think) is of great importance and should be bowed to on entering or leaving the house.

Parent of the House: An honorary position granted to an old friend and ally of the society who has rendered great service (translation: debates hack who won't leave). The parent is accorded a good seat and has no onerous duties. Nice work if you can get it.

Union Hack: Someone who is very active within the Students Association (Most Convenors).

Floor Speeches: Your chance to have your voice heard in the chamber and recorded in the historic minute book where it will never be heard again. These minutes really do go back to 1794 and can be found in the library.

The Gaudeamus: A mediaeval drinking song that has been preserved into the 21st century by the strenuous efforts of the society. It is sung at the end of a debate and the audience is led in song by the Serjeant-at-arms as the board procession leaves the chamber.

Gowns: Introduced in St Andrews to identify undergraduates in taverns, gowns have become a fixture in Lower Parliament Hall. They are traditionally worn by the board and any member of the audience who so wish.

Heckling: The audience may not offer points of information during the table speeches but they are allowed, indeed greatly encouraged, to show their appreciation (or lack thereof) in traditional parliamentary fashion with cries of "Resign", "Shame", or "Hear, hear".



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The Gaudeamus

Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenes dum sumus
Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenes dum sumus
Post jucundam juventutem
Post molestam senectutem
Nos habebit humus
Nos habebit humus

Vivat academia
Vivant professors
Vivat academia
Vivant professores
Vivat membrum quodlibet
Vivant membra quaelibet
Semper sint in flore
Semper sint in flore