



international debate education association

Trainer Accreditation Standards

Trainers assume a central role in IDEA's activities. By introducing students to debate education, to the skills essential for effective public speaking, and to the critical analysis of complicated issues, trainers provide students with the foundation for the successful practice of speech and debate. They are a tremendous influence on the lives of students, and represent the vanguard in promoting free and open discussion.

The practice of speech and debate offers enormous benefits to students, both as a means of encouraging the analytical examination and exchange of ideas, and as a means of developing students' self-confidence. For these reasons, IDEA stands firmly committed to the introduction of, and experimentation with, speech and debate as teaching and learning devices.

IDEA encourages trainers who wish to introduce speech and debate into their classroom to pursue accreditation. In doing so, an educator acknowledges not only the benefits of speech and debate, but also commits him or herself to the principles and mission of IDEA.

I. The minimum requirements for any trainer wishing to be accredited includes

- submitting a portfolio (including a resume, two model lesson projects of speech and/or debate trainings, diplomas of honors, training materials, publications)
- a plan of action for the upcoming year, and an activity report
- trainers should also undergo a long-term training course

II. IDEA educators should share the same basic pedagogical assumptions:

- A. They should recognize that speech and debate are student-centered activities.

Participation in academic speech and debate develops students into questioning, analytically minded consumers of intellectual discourse. These qualities are most effectively realized when students are granted opportunities to express their own ideas and to find their own voices.

- B. They should be knowledgeable, and should effectively convey information to others.

Trainers, teachers, and coaches should be committed to intellectual openness, and should be willing to assist students in conducting research. Moreover, educators should provide adequate information (both general and specific) to assist students in understanding the issues at hand. However, the students themselves (and not their coaches or teachers) should prepare cases, analyze topics, conduct research, and develop strategies. In the learning process, the role of the trainer, teacher, and coach should be that of a facilitator.

- C. They should be organized.

Trainers, teachers, and coaches should plan diligently in structuring their teaching time and in constructing their syllabi or teaching program. Every session should have clearly defined objectives, and following each session, the trainer, teacher, or coach should evaluate the achievement of those objectives based upon sound, pre-established criteria.

D. They should create a positive learning environment.

A supportive and caring environment – one in which all students receive attention, and in which they are challenged to reach their full potential – is the most important element in the facilitation of learning. This occurs when educators fully engage their students in the educational process. Effective educators recognize the importance of adapting speech and debate principles and practices to the specific needs of their audience, and convey these concepts in a sensitive manner.

III. The responsibilities and qualifications that define an effective trainer are:

A. A trainer should be an effective teacher of debate.

A trainer should have a thorough understanding of the theory and practice of debate, and should be able to impart this knowledge to participants in the training workshop. It is not necessary for a trainer to have had substantial debating experience; however, a trainer should be able to train students competently and engagingly in the context of a workshop environment. A trainer should be able to advise students on how to research, prepare arguments, structure responses, and ask critical questions. Finally, a trainer should be continually aware that they are not teaching debate for its own sake, but rather, to equip trainers with the skills necessary to deal with specific issues important to the student.

As a general guideline, trainers should appreciate and act in consonance with IDEA's notion of debate; namely, that debate is a vehicle of democratization and individual empowerment. Trainers should familiarize themselves with IDEA's ethical expectations of judges (Judge Accreditation Standards) and students (Student Practices), and instill in their students respect for these values.

B. A trainer should be a sound pedagogue.

A trainer should adopt methods of teaching that are appropriate to the unique demands of a given training. Trainers should use appropriate methodology to impart skills and knowledge in the most efficient manner. Trainers are encouraged to employ interactive, learner-centric methods geared to a particular audience and reflective of the content of the training. In addition, trainers should use an array of tools, such as role-playing and simulations, group work activities, and audio-visual presentations, to facilitate the learning process.

To improve the effectiveness of their lessons, trainers may draw on personal testimonials from trainees. Moreover, trainers should impart to their audience carefully considered and frequently cited analogies relevant to the issues at hand. Trainers should understand that the basic purpose of training is to teach and empower students; to this end, trainers should not monopolize discussions, but rather, should actively engage *all* students by soliciting their ideas. Finally, a trainer should be able to work productively with co-presenters, and not attempt to upstage them.

C. A trainer should be sensitive to the needs of his or her audience.

A trainer should communicate clearly with his or her students, and should be proficient in the language in which a training is conducted. Trainers should be able to vary the level of complicated terminology and vocabulary used in their trainings; similarly, when asked, trainers should explain terms in a clear and respectful manner.

- D. A trainer should provide a positive and supportive atmosphere for their students.

Often, students may find the experience of a training to be challenge. A trainer should thus strive to cultivate among his or her students not only interest but also a sense of security. A trainer should be able to function effectively in a culturally diverse environment, and by all means and in all instances avoid favoritism and prejudice in all its forms – including, but not limited to gender, linguistic, cultural, and religious biases. A trainer should endeavor to engage all the members of his or her audience equally. Moreover, while trainers should strive to keep their trainings lively at all times, they must also exercise discretion and maturity in their use of humor so as not to offend participants. Finally, it is imperative that trainers maintain respectful and professional relationships with their trainees. At all times and in all circumstances, trainers represent IDEA, and their conduct should demonstrate regard for the principles of fairness and equality espoused herein.

- E. A trainer should employ strong organizational skills in planning and carrying out a training session.

Trainers should plan diligently in budgeting their teaching time and in constructing their syllabus. Every training session should have clearly defined objectives, and following each session, a trainer should evaluate the achievement of those objectives based upon sound, pre-established criteria. Careful organization and planning will allow for flexibility in training sessions and the accommodation of last-minute changes in staffing, student attendance, and shifts of focus in trainees' interests.