

Getting Involved with Homeschool Speech & Debate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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1. What is Speech and Debate?

Speech involves a presentation by one student, or two students in duo events, that is judged against a similar type of presentation by others in a round of competition. Speech events range from public address events delivering memorized speeches, limited preparation events that require some knowledge of certain subjects, bible doctrine, or current events to interpretive events, dramatic or humorous, which challenge students to find powerful moments in literature and recreate them for an audience.

Debate involves a team of two debaters working to effectively convince a judge that their side of a resolution is, as a general principle, more valid. Students in debate come to thoroughly understand both sides of the resolution, having researched each extensively, and learn to think critically about every argument that could be made on each side.

2. What are the club requirements for my child?

In order to participate in Theophilus Speech & Debate Club, families must commit to the following:

- a. Parent agrees their enrolled child will attend regularly scheduled classes. Class absences are excusable for serious circumstances, illness and emergencies, or by prior arrangement. Missed work must be made up.
- b. Enrolled student must complete assigned homework.
- c. Parent agrees to facilitate student assignments by providing fee money, supplies and through allotting time needed in the student's schedule to adequately prepare for assignments and tournaments. Speech and Debate class should be given the same priority that the student's regular coursework receives and should be considered equal in value to any college coursework student may be engaged in.
- d. Parent agrees student will attend club Round Robin and at least the local Tournaments. Round Robins and Tournaments require a considerable investment from families and should be weighed carefully prior to signing up for class participation.
- e. Parents must sign the Theophilus Handbook in order for their child to enroll in the class.

3. Why must we make a commitment to all the above requirements?

Most of the training provided to your child is done by volunteers. We volunteers gladly invest our time, but we only wish to work with those who are serious enough to make a commitment to the coursework involved.

We are inspired by a vision to prepare future Christian leadership, and an essential element of leadership is staying on course it until completion.

Furthermore, we only have so many slots available in the club each year; we wish to reserve these openings for those who will benefit the most from their participation.

4. Why are there so many requirements?

The above requirements have been developed to ensure that students receive enough training to experience the rewards of participating in this activity. To fail to participate in a tournament, for example, is like building a house, but then leaving the roof off; students will have invested in a lot of hard work, but never feel the sense of confidence and excitement that competing in a tournament would bring.

5. My child is taking college classes; what happens if a tournament is scheduled during my child's class time?

Where class schedules and tournaments conflict, parent and student agree to attend tournaments.

Theophilus Speech & Debate Club is for high school students only, not college students. High school students wishing to participate in debate while also desiring to earn college credit should sign up for class times that do not conflict with CCA tournament days. Currently, all CCA tournaments are scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays. If you must sign up for a class that meets on a Friday or Saturday, you must also be prepared to miss those classes when they conflict with a tournament OR YOU SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN OUR DEBATE CLUB. Additionally, it helps to alert college professors that your child is participating in competitive debate and may have to miss classes in order to participate in tournaments. Due to debate's superior academic benefits, it would be highly irregular for a professor to refuse giving special consideration to a student who requests it in order to engage in competitive debate .

Note: Debate demands a level of scholarship beyond what most college students encounter during their college career.

6. What investment should I prepare for in order for my child to participate in a tournament?

a. Time — currently, tournaments are two days in length. They begin early in the morning and conclude in the evening on both days. Tournaments often require travel on the evening prior to the tournament and two overnight stays in a hotel. Parents are usually needed to assist in judging the rounds and therefore need to make arrangements to care for younger children.

b. Money — for supplies, appropriate clothing, travel, hotel expenses, food and tournament fees. You may also need to hire a sitter to watch your children during the tournament. Another option is to recruit a friend to attend the tournament and to pay your friend's expenses. Regarding tournament fees: while our Christian league works hard to keep tournament costs down, and the staff volunteer large blocks of time in order to make tournaments run smoothly, every tournament requires fees in order to defray the cost of the facility and supplies needed.

7. I want my child to participate, but I feel very unsure that I can guarantee I will be able to follow through with all that's required. Should I still sign my child up?

Participating in Christian forensics not only develops your child's communication skills, but also has the potential to enrich your whole family in a very holistic and meaningful way. You must pray about your involvement and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. You must be willing to make sacrifices, but also exert faith in God, relying on Him to supply what you are not able to. Those who have participated in debate in past years can attest to God's faithfulness, not merely providing for their needs to get to a tournament, but also to how God has used this activity to shape their own character and move them out of their comfort zones.

8. What if my family situation changes and we need to drop out of this activity?

In the event of tragic or serious circumstances, any family may withdraw, temporarily or permanently, from club participation and it is our desire that our club will provide comfort and prayer for any member family who must do so.

Withdrawing/or defaulting on one's club commitment at any time for any reason is a matter of personal conscience. No one will try to force you to remain in the club if you wish to depart. It is up to you to be a person who keeps his/her word. Below are common reasons you will want to withdraw, which are not considered valid:

- a. My/my child's schedule is too full.
- b. My child is behind on other schoolwork.
- c. My child hates speech and debate.
- d. My child loves speech and debate too much.
- e. I hate speech and debate.
- f. My child has a job.
- g. My child has sports practices or games.
- h. My child is taking college classes.
- i. I didn't realize what was involved.

9. Why can't I withdraw for any reason?

You can, but you will be breaking your commitment—your word. There are several reasons why we require a commitment from families:

The first is that this is a challenging activity for your child. Most children will feel like giving up many times during the learning phase. Children will need the firmness of their parents'

commitment to see them through the rough spots until the children actually begin reaping the rewards of the activity.

The second reason is that the club's morale will be undermined if people randomly begin dropping out. The children form a supportive bond with each other; a feeling of being in the trenches together; of accomplishing a meaningful task together. There is an appropriate time to withdraw at the end of the class or at the end of the season and everyone should be able to count on their club buddies remaining their club buddies until those key exit times.

The third reason is that debate requires teams. Once your child is partnered with someone, they will be counting on your child in order to be able to compete.

The fourth reason is this is a stretching experience for your whole family. Sometimes it will feel as though forensics competition is all-consuming and throwing your whole life off-kilter. This stretching process is uncomfortable, but if you hang on, you and your family will reap the benefits of a creating a family culture rich with character development, scholarship, communication skills, thinking skills, people skills, career and leadership skills.

The fifth reason is that the beginning is the hardest part of the journey and the point when most people will want to throw in the towel. Once the initial learning curve is mastered and the fruit of one's labor has been tasted, forensics becomes less consuming and far more enjoyable. Some of us "get bitten by the bug" and actually love participating in this activity and all that it implies.

10. How much time will my child be investing in speech & debate?

Plan on your child spending at least 10 hours per week with class assignments. There will be weeks when your child may spend much more than that, say, right before a tournament. Your child's first year will usually demand far more time than subsequent years as there are so many skills that will need sharpening at once. If you find your child spending too much time on a consistent basis, it will be up to you to provide more structure to your child's academic regimen and to limit his forensics' work. Be careful in doing this, however, as your child may feel she needs this amount of effort in order to be prepared for one of the most feared activities among humans: public speaking.

It is also useful to evaluate whether some of your child's school work may be a duplication of effort and can be eliminated. Writing debate cases and speeches can replace English composition. Extemporaneous speech and some policy debate topics will more than adequately cover geography, current events, law, government, history, economics and logic. Club meetings can take the place of youth group meetings. Creating an interpretive piece from literature and presenting it will give your child an intimate acquaintance with great writing and the ability to detect layers and nuances of meaning in all literature he encounters. Knowledge gained on the anvil of forensics will not easily be forgotten. Furthermore, they will have a far broader and deeper knowledge base about their world than most adults will ever acquire.