

# Speech And Debate! What Is It Exactly?

Hyena or fire ants as a pet, chocolate or vanilla, or even serious things like wars and global problems. These are all things that you could debate or speak about in speech and debate.

Speech and debate is an extracurricular almost all schools have but are not taken advantage of and should be. Speech and debate can help a few things such as public speaking, researching, and socializing.

Public speaking is a big part of speech and debate because every time you talk it's in front of people. Research skills help reinforce your speeches or

cases in categories such as public forum, congressional debate, or mixed exempt. Finally, it helps you connect and socialize more by meeting so many people, it's easier to get along with others that compete because you see them so often and you have similar interests like speech and debate.

"Debate has been a great experience. I've definitely seen a lot of actual benefits in my day-to-day life, in writing for actual classes, the way I organize myself, and how I manage my time. It's been a lot of fun and even though it can be stressful, once you push through and get the hang of it, it's very rewarding," junior Carmela Davidson said.

Another skill that can be learned through speech and debate is in depth thinking on topics you may not think about often, expanding your perspective and learning on more topics.

"One unique thing about debate is that students prepare and argue BOTH sides of a Congress bill or Public Forum resolution. Flexible thinking and thinking on your feet are essential for every career and a key issue in our society currently," speech and debate coach Aymi Paradise-Flores said.

In speech and debate, there are different categories you can compete in and some of the most popular are public forum, congressional debate, and speech events such as spontaneous speaking or mixed exempt.

"I would recommend public forum even though it can be intimidating at first. It is simple and you can have a lot of fun. You can also learn a lot from every

team you go against," sophomore Gavin Houchins-McCallum said.

Congressional debate is another highly recommended category that is just as beneficial as public forum.

"I'd definitely recommend it to anyone who wants to do speech and debate but is scared of how intimidating going up against someone else

is. In congress we often work together to come up with dockets and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, and there's not a ton of back and forth attacking each other like public forum," Davidson said.

While both categories are competitive and only one person or team can win, almost all the people who participate in those categories are polite, helpful and fun to be around.

During competitions there are multiple schools from all over the district and outside of the district so it can be overwhelming, but it's not as overwhelming when you have a feeling of comfort being around others you know.

"I love all the Des Moines speech and debate kids. We might be five different teams, but we always support each other and love hanging out with each

**"Don't worry about how good you are, do what you enjoy, and you can progress over time," Houchins-McCallum said.**

other,” Roosevelt junior Claire Badio said.

People may be intimidated by the thought of speech and debate but it’s something that you shouldn’t be afraid of. It may be a little difficult at first but so are most things, you just have to keep improving as you go.

“I’d tell anyone who wants to try speech and debate to just do it, there’s so much variety and the teams always helping each other and working together to have as much fun as possible. Even if you don’t think you’re good at speaking or debating, you can definitely get better with speech and debate,” Davidson said.



Photo of Hoover debate team, photo from @hooverhuskies01 on instagram



Part of Hoover debate team, photo from @hooverspeechanddebate on Instagram

## What Are Popular Types Of Debate?

### Speech!

Speech categories are very popular among the students. Two of the more popular ones are spontaneous speaking and mixed exempt. Spontaneous speaking is where you get three prompts that can be anything and you choose one. Once you choose, you get three minutes to prep then five minutes to do a speech on your topic. This is helpful to people new to speech and debate by getting them ready to speak in public and on their feet. Mixed exempt is similar to spontaneous speaking, but you are given a prompt. After you have 30 minutes with internet access to gather enough resources and information, you make a seven-minute speech on the topic.

### Congress!

In congressional debate, the competitors are given a list of laws/bills to research prior to the tournament. At the tournament, they begin by giving three-minute speeches on the bills along with one to two minutes of questioning. They go back and forth between the affirmative and negation sides of the bills or laws. They also get to vote on the bills or laws depending on whether they are on the affirmative or negation side, then they move on to the next. They usually get through about six to eight bills for competition.

### Public Forum!

In public forum, you are in a team of two and you go up against another team of two. You debate the same topic for about a month and then it switches to a different one. Each team has a speaker one and speaker two, speaker one reads off a script to start and then second speaker rebuttals against the other team’s speech and it goes back and forth. The format is first speech given, questioning, rebuttal, questioning, summary, and ends with final focus. The way to win is to convince your judge that your case outweighs the opponent’s case. “I would recommend public forum even though it can be intimidating at first. It is simple and you can have a lot of fun. You can also learn a lot from every team you go against,” sophomore Gavin Houchins-McCallum said.