

**Rotary** **YOUTH**  
**SPEAKS** **A Debate**  
**COMPETITION**



**INFORMATION PACK**

**2026-27**



[ROTARYGBI.ORG](https://rotarygbi.org)

**Rotary**   
Great Britain & Ireland

# Information Pack for 2026-27

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# Information Pack for 2026-27

## Introduction

The Rotary Youth Speaks: A Debate Competition is organised and promoted by Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (Rotary GB&I).

In this public speaking competition, Rotary Youth Speaks – A Debate, teams of three young people adopt the roles of Chairperson, Proposer and Opposer. They present opposing views on a topic of their choice and are then asked a question(s) by a pre-selected member of the audience. Each team has 15 minutes to deliver their debate.

This is one of two public speaking competitions designed to encourage young people to develop creative and presentation skills essential to the art of public speaking. Information about the companion competition, “Rotary Youth Speaks”, can be found [here](#).

There are three stages possible for this competition, each designed to nurture and encourage effective communication skills. Some stages may have more than one round to select those progressing to the next stage.

## Aims and Objectives

The competition aims to provide young people with:

- experience speaking on a public platform as part of a team
- motivation to develop and present arguments on topical subjects while opposing another viewpoint
- discipline in dealing with a topic in a limited time
- the opportunity of learning and practising high standards of expression, presentation and appearance
- impartial feedback and assessment of their performance by experienced judges

## Who can take part?

This competition is open to teams of three young people in the age groups below on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026 and who live within a Rotary Great Britain and Ireland district, including Gibraltar, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Entrants may apply as an independent team or through a group or community organisation including schools and colleges, home educated, other young peoples’ community organisations, for example, community RotaKids, community Interact, Scout Groups, Girl Guides, etc. It should be noted that some intermediate entrants may be 14 and some senior entrants may be 18 at the time of some or all the stages of the competitions e.g., a young person who may be 17 on 31<sup>st</sup> August but turns 18 on 1<sup>st</sup> September is allowed to enter.

Each team will comprise three students in education, apprenticeships, work or volunteering in one of the following age groups:

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Intermediate | 11 to 13 years old |
| Senior       | 14 to 17 years old |

## How to Enter

To enter a local heat, contact your local Rotary club. You can find one using the club finder at the top left-hand corner of the homepage of the Rotary GB&I website [www.rotarygbi.org](http://www.rotarygbi.org). If you’re unable to reach a local club, or if you have any questions, please email the Rotary GB&I Competitions Team at [competitions@rotarygbi.org](mailto:competitions@rotarygbi.org).

A completed entry form, available from the local Rotary club, should be submitted by each team member and submitted to the local organiser by the deadline specified by them.

Should the team need to change any of its members between stages due to lack of availability, then an updated entry form/s need to be submitted to the event organiser prior to the start of that stage.

Important: Entrants may participate in a competition organised by a Rotary club outside their geographical area but may enter only one local heat.

## The Three Stages of the Competition

**Please note: each Rotary district and cluster (group of districts) may choose one, both or neither of the public speaking competitions to run in their area so be sure to check what is available in your area and to what stage.**

The dates for local heats, district and cluster finals competitions will be determined locally. Entrants should check dates with their local Rotary club in the first instance. Any entries submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

**IMPORTANT: Be sure to check any variations to what is outlined in this Information Pack at each stage. For example, there may be variations to the overall time limit or to the time limits for different members of the team. Entrants should check the detailed requirements for each stage with the organiser of that stage.**

### Local Heats

These are organised by local Rotary clubs, each of which sets its own deadline for entries, which are generally between September and December. There may be more than one round to select those progressing to the District Finals.

### District Finals

The winners of each category are entered into a Rotary district competition. These are organised by each Rotary district for the winners of the local heats for each category. They are generally completed by mid-February. In the case of a high number of entrants, it may be necessary to hold preliminary rounds prior to a District Final. Any preliminary rounds must be completed within the same guidelines.

Sponsoring clubs are responsible for assisting with food and/or travel costs to the District Final venue.

### Cluster Finals

The winners of each category in the District Finals are then entered into the Cluster Final. The Cluster Finals are organised by several Rotary districts together and are generally completed by early March.

Sponsoring clubs are responsible for assisting with food and/or travel costs to the Cluster Final venue.

## Competition Guidelines

### Task

Teams prepare and deliver a 15-minute debate on a topic of their choice in front of an audience. **Be sure to check with the stage organiser whether they have varied this time, it may be less than 15 minutes but would not be more.**

Teams should be mindful that Rotary is a non-religious, non-political organisation. Topics chosen by the team should be appropriate and respectful and should not set out deliberately to cause offence to others. Teams may choose to change the topic for debate at any subsequent level of the competition.

Each team comprises three members each taking a specific role: Chairperson, Proposer (speaking for the motion) and Opposer (speaking against the motion). An indication of what is expected of each of the roles can be seen later in this document.

The Team will be allocated a total of 15 minutes to present their debate. The timing of each part will not be monitored but it is recommended that both the Proposer and Opposer speak for 5 minutes with the Chairperson taking up the remaining 5 minutes for introductions and summing up.

The team should remain the same throughout each stage of the competition. In exceptional circumstances substitutions may be made, subject to the approval of the stage organiser.

### Judges

The judges will be people with appropriate skills appointed by the organisers at the club, district and cluster levels accordingly.

### Judging Criteria

The judging criteria and scoresheet can be found at the back of this Information Pack.

Judges will deduct one point for:

- each complete 15 seconds over the allocated time of 15 minutes
- each complete 30 seconds under the allocated time of 15 minutes.

A Rotarian with no interest in the participating teams will review the scores to ensure accuracy before the results are announced.

After the judges have determined the result of the competition one or more judges will comment on their observations of the competition before announcing the result.

The judges will not enter any discussion or correspondence regarding their decision; the decision of the judges will be final and not subject to any appeal.

### Questioner

The questioner, (not a judge), will be appointed by the competition organiser to ask a question directed at one or both the Proposer and Opposer. This person must be an independent person and may be a Rotarian or their partner who has not been involved in any of the clubs in that round of the competition.

### Recognition

At all stages of the competition, competitors will receive a Certificate of Participation.

## Competition Procedure

### Arrival

Before each competition, the organiser will conduct a ballot to determine the order in which each team will participate which will be notified to teams on arrival. Organisers have the right to adjust the order should teams arrive late or in unforeseen circumstances.

Prior to the start of the competition the organiser will confirm that all the teams are fully aware of the competition procedure as described below.

### Arrangements and Order of Speakers

A master of ceremonies will invite each team in the order of the ballot to come to the front or to the stage to deliver their presentation.

Teams should be led to their positions by the Chairperson who should sit with the Proposer on their right and the Opposer on their left. This is a team competition and team members must conduct themselves appropriately by being attentive and engaged while the other team members are speaking.

The team MAY NOT use any props, including PowerPoint or similar presentations. Nor may they enter a dramatic performance as this is a public speaking competition.

Notes may be used, however, their use should not be too obvious. If electronic media is used for this purpose, it must be used only as a reminder of the content of the speech and not as a prop or as a live means of presenting or sourcing information.

Where a venue would benefit from amplification, static microphones will be provided for team members to use. A sound test will be arranged prior to the competition. If any team member fails to use any provided static microphones and their words are inaudible, the judges will deduct marks.

The team members will speak in the following order:

#### Chairperson

When the team is ready and has been given the signal to start, the Chairperson will stand. The Chairperson should control the debate. They should open the meeting and welcome the audience, introduce the speakers and their chosen topic.

#### Proposer

The Proposer will put forward relevant arguments for the motion. The speech should be structured with an introduction, points for the motion and a conclusion.

#### Opposer

The Opposer should put forward relevant arguments against the motion. If possible, they should pick up on some of the points put forward by the proposer. The speech should be structured with an introduction, points against the motion and a conclusion.

#### Chairperson

When the speakers have finished the chairperson should invite a question from the audience. At this point the time clock will be paused.

#### Proposer/Opposer answers question

The Proposer and/or the Opposer, as appropriate, should reply to the question, and are advised to respond spontaneously, without prepared sections, to obtain high marks from judges.

The response should be limited to two minutes which will be timed but does not count toward the 15-minute timing.

An amber light will indicate when two minutes are drawing to a close and after the amber light the speaker should bring their response to a conclusion.

After they have answered the time clock will resume.

#### Chairperson

The chairperson should close the debate with an appropriate summing up.

#### Timings

The Team will be allocated a total of 15 minutes to present their debate. Timing of each part will not be monitored but it is recommended that both the Proposer and Opposer speak for 5 minutes with the Chairperson taking up the remaining 5 minutes for the introductions and summing up.

Answering questions from the audience will not be included in the timing of 15 minutes but any answer should be limited to two minutes, and this will be timed separately. A reply to the question which exceeds the stipulated time will be taken into consideration by the judges.

Timing signals using lights or coloured cards will be given:

- Green – to start
- Amber - one minute to go (14 minutes)
- Red – end of allocated time (15 minutes).

The Team should not stop suddenly at the final signal but should be aware that time over the limit will be penalised by 1 point for each complete 15 seconds over the allocated time of 15 minutes and 1 point for each complete 30 seconds under the allocated time of 15 minutes.

### Results

Once judging is complete, one or more of the judges will provide feedback and the competition results will be announced.

### Rotary Youth Competitions and other opportunities for young people

Take a look at <https://www.rotaryqbi.org/projects/young-people/> to explore

- other Rotary Youth Competitions: Artist, Chef, Environmentalist, Musician, Photographer, Writer and Youth Speaks
- and
- Rotary Young Citizen Awards, Rotary Young Citizen Environmentalist Award, Rotary Young Citizen Peacemaker Award and Rotary Young Citizen Sporting Hero Award

You may wish to enter more than one competition or Award.

You'll also find information about

- Rotary Technology Tournaments which are organised in many areas
- Rotary programmes including RotaKids, Interact, and Developing Future Leaders
- Rotary Youth Exchange and more

There may be additional opportunities available locally - connect with Rotarians in your area to find out what's happening near you.

### Working with Children

Rotary GB&I has adopted this statement of policy in working with children, vulnerable adults and those with disability:

The needs and rights of the child, the elderly, the vulnerable and those with disability take priority. It is the duty of every Rotarian to safeguard to the best of their ability, the welfare of and prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect of all children, the elderly, persons with disability or otherwise vulnerable persons with whom they come into contact during their Rotarian duties.

Click here to see the [Rotary GB&I Safeguarding Policy](#)

## Rotary Youth Speaks: A Debate - Judges' Score Sheet

| Team:                      |                                     |       | Topic for debate:  | Judge:      |       |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|--|-------------|-------|
| MEMBER                     | ASPECT                              | MARKS | POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED  | COMMENTS    | SCORE |
| CHAIRPERSON                | Delivery                            | 5     | Effective use of voice, clear enunciation, confident and relaxed manner. Engage audience. Use of notes.  |             |       |
|                            | Manner and control of debate        | 5     | Polite but business-like handling of meeting, showing appropriate attention.   |             |       |
|                            | Process                             | 5     | Welcome audience. Explain structure of meeting and introduce speakers and topic for debate.  |             |       |
|                            | Summing up and close of proceedings | 5     | Take question from floor.<br>Close debate appropriately, including thanks to both speakers.  |             |       |
| PROPOSER                   | Delivery                            | 10    | Effective use of voice, clear enunciation, confident and relaxed manner. Engage audience. Use of notes.  |             |       |
|                            | Subject and Construction of topic   | 25    | Content of the speech and logic.<br>Develop the topic and demonstrate clear thinking. Show knowledge and understanding of topic. Conclude by summarising points and why you are proposing the topic. |             |       |
| OPPOSER                    | Delivery                            | 10    | Effective use of voice, clear enunciation, confident and relaxed manner. Engage audience. Use of notes.  |             |       |
|                            | Subject and Construction            | 25    | Develop relevant arguments to points raised by proposer while also showing a knowledge and understanding of the topic. Conclude by summarising points and why you are opposing the subject.          |             |       |
| TEAMWORK                   | General                             | 5     | Posture, stance, mannerisms, general appearance, observance of formalities.  |             |       |
|                            | Question/Answer                     | 5     | Ability of Proposer/Opposer to answer question appropriately.  |             |       |
|                            | Timing of presentation              |       | Marks to be <b>deducted</b> in this section for mismanagement of time (see Time Sheet).  |             |       |
| Possible Score: 100 points |                                     |       |  | TOTAL SCORE |       |

## Rotary Youth Speaks: A Debate - Time Sheet

Lights: **Green** – start; **Amber** – one minute to go (14 minutes); **Red** – end of allocated time (15 minutes)

- For The Question/s Pause the Clock – AND - Resume After The Question/s Have Been Answered
  - The time for answering the question should be no more than 2 minutes and this should be timed separately
- Deduct one point for each complete 15 seconds over the allocated time of 15 minutes
- Deduct one point for each complete 30 seconds under the allocated time of 15 minutes.

| Team Name | Intermediate/<br>Seniors | Time Speaking (Reference only) |          |         | Total Time | Points Deduction |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|------------|------------------|
|           |                          | Chair                          | Proposer | Opposer |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |
|           |                          |                                |          |         |            |                  |