



DEBATE FORMAT

The debates which will be staged under the auspices of the Trinidad & Tobago Debates Commission are for the benefit of the people of Trinidad & Tobago. The main purpose of the debates is to help persons in making informed choices among candidates for office.

The debates shall be produced as “made for television events” by format, meaning that they will run as a TV programme would. Notwithstanding, all debates will be done in a manner accommodating all media, thereby ensuring that print and other electronic media are not at a disadvantage.

The format will be as follows:

- i. *Each debate shall be 90 minutes in duration.*
- ii. *Debates will commence at 800 PM.*
- iii. *Debates will be on specific subject areas, and any question relating to those areas will be allowed as being relevant.*
- iv. *Except for the leader’s debate where each party will have one debater, each participating political party will be permitted up to two debaters per debate.*
- v. *In the event that there are two debaters representing a party, it shall be the responsibility of the party to establish who will address each question posed to the party in the timeframe allowed for answers.*
- vi. *In addition to the "top and tail" commercials, there will be three commercial breaks of two minutes duration at 20-minutes, 45 minutes and 70 minutes in the debates*
- vii. *The countdown of time to answer each question, rebut or make opening/closing statements will be displayed for the debaters to see. Either the traditional green, amber and red lights will be used or a clock positioned for easy visibility of the time elapsing will be provided.*
- viii. *The moderator will direct the flow of the debate, assisted by a time keeper and guided by the instructions of a producer;*



- ix. *A panel of three other questioners will ask questions of the debaters.*
- x. *The Trinidad & Tobago Debates Commission will have no role or influence in determining any of the questions asked and the questions posed will be entirely at the determination of the individual questioners.*
- xi. *Debaters will have a maximum of 120 seconds to answer the question posed to him/her. Each debater will be allowed a maximum of 90 seconds to rebut the answer given by the other debater*
- xii. *The moderator will have the latitude to raise follow up questions for clarification only. Questioners will be allowed a follow up question to their primary question on only two occasions during the entire debate. Follow up questions will be permitted at the discretion of the moderator. Where a follow up question is asked, the debater shall have 30 seconds to provide the answer. Where a follow up question is asked it shall not interrupt the sequence of questions posed to the respective debaters.*
- xiii. *While the debater is responding, one reaction shot of no longer than 3 seconds is allowed of the other debater.*
- xiv. *Debaters are not allowed to ask questions of the moderator and questioners except in a rhetorical manner.*
- xv. *If a debater chooses, s/he can combine answers as a means of further rebuttal, that is, in answering a question, the debater may chose to give a succinct answer and to say that in relation to the previously made point or asked question s/he would like to say further..... However, in doing so an answer must be given to the specific question posed to the debater.*
- xvi. *Debaters are to refer to their opponents courteously by name (not as Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition).*
- xvii. *The debate will require pre-debate acknowledgement and post debate acknowledgement by each debater of the other, at minimum, a respectful handshake.*
- xviii. *Debaters should arrive at the decision on who will speak first, by the tossing of a coin (possibly by their authorized representatives) at least 24 hours prior to the debate; the person winning the toss will determine who gives the first opening statement. For the*



closing statement, the debater who was the first to give the opening statement will yield to the other debater to speak last.

- xix. *Debaters will each have a 2-minute opening statement after the introductory comments of the moderator*
- xx. *Debaters will also each be allowed closing remarks of two minutes duration.*
- xxi. *Towards the end of the debate, both debaters will be allowed to ask their opponent one question of their choosing, to which they are both obliged to give an answer within 45 seconds. The answer given in this case can be rebutted but in no longer than 30 seconds*
- xxii. *Debaters must be at the venue at least one hour prior to the start of the debate.*
- xxiii. *Debaters will be asked to stand for the duration of the debate, but can sit during breaks, as long as the floor manager concurs at the time that the sitting is during the breaks.*
- xxiv. *The debater who is responding to a question is permitted to move no more than two feet away to the left, right or further behind the podium during their response.*
- xxv. *Each participating political party will be allowed not more than three support persons with whom they can consult during the breaks.*
- xxvi. *Debaters can consult their support team during the breaks but support teams must leave the stage 30 seconds before the start of a segment or at any time on the instruction of the floor manager*
- xxvii. *Debaters are asked to note that they are speaking to a wider audience than those persons in the room. References to members of the audience will no be allowed.*
- xxviii. *Camera shots of the audience will not be done except when going to breaks or returning from them.*
- xxix. *During the debate, reaction shots in the audience will not be shown.*
- xxx. *The political parties are not responsible for the costs and expenses related to the staging of the debates.*