

The Debate-Ready Handbook

Quick steps to think clearly and speak confidently before any important moment — an interview, a presentation, a viva, or a hard conversation.

This handbook distills what Verbattle teaches across four debate formats and years of workshops into six things you can actually use in the ten minutes before something important happens. Keep it, print it, or save it to your phone — it's built to be read fast.

IN THIS HANDBOOK

1	The 5-Minute Pre-Event Checklist
2	The PREP Framework for Any Answer
3	Three Questions Worth Asking Before You Agree to Anything
4	Handling a Tough Follow-Up Question
5	Using Humour Safely
6	The Emergency Reset

Verbattle · No.66/3, 1st Floor, 18th Cross, 9th Main, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, Bengaluru – 560011 · hello@verbattle.in · +91-8549904990 · www.verbattle.in

BEFORE YOU WALK IN

1. The 5-Minute Pre-Event Checklist

Run through this in the elevator, the corridor, or the last few minutes before you're called in.

- 1 **Breathe for 30 seconds.** Four counts in, four counts hold, four counts out. This is the same reset debaters use before stepping up to speak.
- 2 **Name your one key message.** If you only get to say one thing today, what is it? Write it in five words.
- 3 **Sketch your answer skeleton.** Use the PREP framework below for your two or three most likely questions.
- 4 **Check your posture.** Shoulders back, feet flat, hands visible and still. Posture changes how confident you sound, not just how you look.
- 5 **Pick one calming phrase.** A short, true sentence you can return to if your mind goes blank — e.g. “I know this topic. I just need to say it slowly.”

THE CORE FRAMEWORK

2. The PREP Framework for Any Answer

This is the same structure Verbattle debaters use to build a case in under a minute. It works for interview answers, exam responses, and tough questions alike.

P — Point	Say your answer in one sentence, up front.
R — Reason	Give the one reason that point is true.
E — Example	Back it with a specific example or piece of evidence.
P — Point, again	Restate your point so the answer lands and doesn't trail off.

BEFORE YOU AGREE TO ANYTHING

3. Three Questions Worth Asking

Debate builds the habit of probing a claim before accepting it. These three questions travel well outside the debate room — in a group project, a job offer, or a big purchase.

- **What's the evidence for this?** A confident claim is not the same as a true one.
- **What's the alternative?** If you say no to this, what else could you do instead?
- **What happens if this is wrong?** Understand the cost of being wrong before you commit.

Real example: A student asked “what's the source for that?” about a group project assumption three weeks before deadline. The assumption was wrong — and catching it early meant a rewrite instead of a disaster. See the full story at verbattle.in/stories.html.

WHEN YOU'RE PUSHED

4. Handling a Tough Follow-Up Question

This is what a rebuttal round trains — staying composed when someone pushes back on what you just said.

- 1 **Pause.** Two seconds of silence looks like confidence, not weakness.
- 2 **Acknowledge.** “That's a fair question” or “I see why you'd ask that” buys you time and de-escalates tension.
- 3 **Bridge.** Connect the pushback back to something you can speak to confidently.
- 4 **Answer.** Give a direct answer — don't over-explain or apologise for the question itself.

YOUR SECRET WEAPON

5. Using Humour Safely

Healthy humour is a debating skill — it comes from reading the room, not from having the best jokes. A few rules keep it safe:

- **Punch up or punch at yourself, never down.** Self-deprecating humour is almost always safe; humour at someone else's expense rarely is.
- **Read the room before you use it.** If the room is tense and unfamiliar, wait for a signal before you try to lighten it.
- **Keep it short.** One line, then move on. A joke that needs explaining has already failed.
- **Have an exit.** If it doesn't land, don't repeat it or defend it — continue confidently to your next point.

IF YOUR MIND GOES BLANK

6. The Emergency Reset

Every debater freezes at least once. Here is the exact sequence Verbattle coaches teach for getting back on track without panicking.

- 1 **Pause and breathe.** Silence is recoverable. Visible panic is harder to recover from.
- 2 **Restate the question in your own words.** This buys thinking time and confirms you understood it correctly.

- 3 **Give a partial answer.** Start with whatever piece you do have — momentum often brings the rest back.
- 4 **Build from there.** Use the PREP framework to structure the rest of your answer as you go.

Keep practicing. These reflexes are built through repetition — the same way Verbattle students build them, one round at a time. Explore a free trial workshop, a debate club, or Club Verbattle's weekly discussion prompts at verbattle.in/programs.html and verbattle.in/club.html.