

Judging Parliamentary Debate

Teams

Government (GOV)	Opposition (OPP)
Prime Minister, Member of Government	Leader of the Opposition, Member of Opposition
Role: use resolution to make up a Case Topic (a proposed change to fix a problem)	Role: must argue against whatever change the Gov proposes, regardless of personal feelings
Task: To convince you that the problem is serious, and their proposal is the best way to fix it	Task: to convince you either that the problem isn't really a problem, or that the Gov's plan isn't the best solution, or that it will create more problems than it solves, etc.
Desired outcome: convince judge that the change SHOULD be made	Desired outcome: convince judge that change should NOT be made

Before the Debate

Once all parties are in the room, instruct the government to tell the opposition the case topic that they have determined. The opposition now has **5 minutes** to prepare their approach. If the Gov's topic is arguing for the **status quo** (a situation which is already true in the world), or is completely dependent on **specific knowledge**, give them 5 minutes to come up with a new case, and then start this process over again. During this time, you should fill in the top of your ballot. Write NOVICE or VARSITY across the top, fill in the team and debater names.

Starting the Debate

After 5 minutes has elapsed (or when the opposition tells you that they are ready), say, *"I now call this House to order, and call upon the Prime Minister to present his/her constructive speech, not to exceed 7 minutes plus a 30 second grace period."*

During the Debate

Call upon the debaters in the following order, allocating them the time listed:

Prime Minister's constructive speech	7 min (+ 30 sec grace period)
Leader of the Opposition's constructive speech	8 min (+ 30 sec grace period)
Member of Government's constructive speech	8 min (+ 30 sec grace period)
Member of the Opposition's constructive speech	8 min (+ 30 sec grace period)
<i>Leader of the Opposition's rebuttal speech</i>	<i>4 min (+ 30 sec grace period)</i>
<i>Prime Minister's rebuttal speech</i>	<i>5 min (+ 30 sec grace period)</i>

When each speaker starts talking, note the time so that you can keep track of how much time they use. Speakers are not required to use all of their time, and novices likely will not, especially at the beginning of the season. If a debater goes over time, do NOT stop him/her; let the other team call it by rising on a point of order (explained below). As the students speak, jot down what they say and any strengths or weaknesses you see in their speech on a flow sheet. Do not worry about filling in the ballot at this point.

While new arguments can be introduced during at any point during the constructive speeches, no new arguments may be introduced during the rebuttal speeches. (New examples to support existing arguments are permitted.)

Miscellaneous Rules

Students may whisper to one another while the opponent is speaking, to plan their strategy, or they may pass each other notes.

Students may bring notes to the podium (but no pens!)

Students may choose to time themselves, by bringing a watch or phone to the podium.

If students prefer, they can have their partner keep time and communicate with hand signals.

Students are not allowed to use phones or other devices to research aspects of the case; phones may ONLY be used as timing devices

Key Terms

- **Resolution:** quotation, slogan, or phrase used to spark topics of debate
- **Link:** line of reasoning connecting the resolution to the case topic
- **Case Topic:** actual issue of debate, which may be any topic within **general knowledge**, serious or frivolous.
- **Definitions:** The Gov should set limits on the terms used in their Case Topic to prevent Opp from exploiting loopholes and changing to focus of the debate. If Gov fails to set these limits within the first Prime Minister speech, Opp is allowed to exploit loopholes and change the focus of the debate (in this case, the PM should be penalized and the LO rewarded).
- **Contentions:** major lines of argument to support a case topic. The government will generally introduce 3.
- **Specific knowledge:** any fact not known by the average college freshman. The government may not introduce specific knowledge, but the opposition may.
- **Clash:** strong and clear disagreement on the issue, which the government's case topic should invite
- Opposition strategies: Opp has a variety of options for how to attack the case proposed by Gov. Each of these is optional, and debaters should choose which is most appropriate.
 - **Counter-contention:** a major argument introduced by the Opp against the case topic.
 - **Negative Philosophy:** an overarching theme that underlies the Opp's arguments; should be tied into each of the contentions.
 - **Alternative Proposal:** by showing that a different solution to the problem would work even better, Opp can convince you not to endorse Gov's proposed solution. Must use 3 original contentions introduced by Gov
 - They may convince you that the problem isn't really that bad, so the proposed change is unwarranted, or that Gov's plan will do more harm than good.
 - They may pick out one very specific flaw with the Gov case, and use that to argue that the Gov's entire proposal is invalid, or they may argue in terms of the big picture; they may attack the Gov's logic, or they may focus on contradicting examples.

After the Debate

Thank the debaters, but do *not* tell the debaters who won, or give them any feedback on their performance. Fill out your ballot according to the guidelines below.

Points of Order

If a rule is violated, a debater may rise on a point of order. The clock stops until you have ruled on the point.

Violations include

- 1) specific knowledge (applies to Gov only; Opp may use specific knowledge)
- 2) speaking beyond the time limit (remember the 30 second grace period)
- 3) introducing new arguments during the rebuttal (remember new examples are ok, as are new responses to arguments previously introduced)
- 4) bloody murder

The rulings you make are either "Point well taken," "Point not well taken," and "Point under consideration." This last one means you will decide what to rule after the round (perhaps after conferring with a coach).

Points of Personal Privilege

If a debater has been misquoted or insulted, s/he may rise on a point of personal privilege. Debaters may also rise on his/her partner's behalf. Similarly to Points of Order, the clock stops until you have ruled on the issue.

Heckling

Heckling is allowed; that is, the team not speaking at any moment may make comments on things said at the podium. Heckles should, however, be three things: brief, witty, and rare. If a team is heckling merely to distract or "throw off" the person at the podium, it should count against the team doing it.

**Please note that Points of Order/Personal Privilege and Heckling do not particularly factor into the debaters' scores.

Scoring Process

Step 1: Decide which team won: Write the name of the winning team on the “**speed ballot**”

Did Gov convince you that the change should be made? Or did Opp convince you that the change should not be made?

Step 2: Come up with a numerical score for each the 4 speakers. Ties are OK! Remember that when you add up the points for the two members of a team, the team you chose as the winner must have a higher total!. Write these numbers on the “speed ballot. If Gov and Opp tie on overall points, it is counted as a win for Opp.

Step 3: Rank the speakers from 1 – 4 (1 is best, no ties allowed). Write these numbers on the “speed ballot”

Step 4: TURN IN THE SPEED BALLOT (white sheet)

Step 5: Write in comments for each speaker, as well as comments about how you chose the winner on the pink sheet. If you wish you can also put in check plus, check, check minus for individual categories.

Scoring Guidelines

19	Poor speaker with weaknesses in all of the judging criteria. (Do not score below 19.)
20–21	Debater has some potential, but major problems in several criteria interfere with effectiveness.
22–23	Competent debater who knows what to do, but lacks in style, depth, and confidence.
24–26	Good debater who knows the rules and has strengths with further potential, but is not outstanding. S/he is a solid debater, but not the best on the team. The top debater in a good round will probably get a 26.
27–28	Excellent debater, strong in all the criteria and knowledgeable about debate theory and procedure.
29	Outstanding debater, with great clash, depth, organization, and style. The best debater in a truly impressive debate will probably get a 29.
30	This debater never leaves a tournament without a trophy, excels in all criteria, and amazes you with his/her maturity, analytical ability, and wit. Give this score only if you cannot imagine any improvement.

*****Practically speaking, almost ALL SCORES should be in the range of 22-28*****

(Except for novices in early tournaments who may score 20 or 21) If you give a score 22 and below, or 28 and above, you should be prepared to defend that score if questioned by league officials.

Judging Gov:

- Case topic: Did it make sense (G)? Was it too strong or not strong enough(B)? Did it seem designed to purposely throw the Opp off their game (B)? Note: serious topics aren't necessarily better than fun ones.
- Did they clearly define their terms(G) or rush through the definitions(B)? Did the definitions clarify the points of debate (G) or did they just use synonyms (B)? Did they overly define terms that weren't in question (B)?
- Contentions: Were the 3 contentions clearly formulated, distinct and logical(G)? Did they adequately convince you that the problem described is serious and that the proposed solution is worth doing(G)?

Judging Opp:

- Argumentation: Did they have a clear strategy (+G) or did they seem to be throwing out arguments randomly (B)? Did they have a countercontention? (optional but G)

Judging both teams:

- Did they **signpost**(G)? Was it easy to follow the logic and organization of their arguments (G)?
- Did they work together and build off each others' ideas (G) or did they seem to contradict each other (B)?
- Did they speak clearly and confidently(G)? Did they speak convincingly (G) without being overly melodramatic or histrionic (G)? Did their style seem natural (G) or contrived (B)?
- Were their arguments logically sound (G) or do they seem to be more style over substance (B)? Did they really *respond* to the other team (G) or keep repeating their original arguments (B)? [In other words, did they seem to be listening to each other and modifying their arguments in response (G)?]
- Did they support their arguments with examples (G)? Did they continue to develop new ideas throughout the first four constructive speeches (G) or did they repeat themselves too much (B)?
- Did they waste most of their rebuttal repeating the contentions (B) or use the time on big picture issues (G)?
- Did they use their full allotted time (G)? Note: Novices get some leeway here.