

Parliamentary Debate Judging Instructions

Please note: The rules followed by the California High School Speech Association differ from other forms of parliamentary debate offered in the United States and abroad. Even if you have parliamentary debate experience elsewhere, it will be worth your time to glance at these instructions. In contrast to the National Parliamentary Debate Association's style of parliamentary debate, CHSSA Parliamentary Debate has no points of order or points of personal privilege. Also, it follows a different time structure.

Event Description: The format of parliamentary debate is based on the structure of the British Parliament. As such, all the speakers enjoy having titles used in the British parliament.

The Resolutions

Traditionally in parliamentary debate, there are three different types of resolution: the resolution of fact, the resolution of value, and the resolution of policy. Later, metaphorical resolutions were also adopted, which act as a sort of "wild card" and can be any of the aforementioned three resolutions.

A resolution of fact is one in which the validity of the resolution is questioned. For example, *student aptitude is best-assessed through standardized testing or the teaching of sex education in high schools is counterproductive in preventing teen pregnancy.*

A resolution of policy is one in which the government team must uphold a certain governmental advocacy. For example, *the United States Federal government should grant the right of same sex marriage or the United Nations ought to send peacekeepers into the Sudan.*

A resolution of value is one in which two competing values are measured against one another. For example, *economic freedom ought to be valued over providing for the needs of the poor or socialism ought to be valued over capitalism.*

Finally, a metaphorical resolution is one in which the debaters take something abstract and build it down to something concrete. For example, if the resolution were *Wild thing, you make my heart sing*, a debater might argue, "President Bush has done some controversial things in the past; in fact, some might call him a wild thing. To make one's heart sing is to make someone feel happy and elated. Therefore, the resolution is asking President Bush to do something that would make his citizenry happy. Thus, we propose that President Bush go forth with his tax cuts." The debaters would then proceed to offer a case outlining the benefits of tax cuts for the people of the United States. (This, of course, would be a metaphorical resolution that the debaters turned into a resolution of policy.) The opposing team need not accept the other team's interpretation of the resolution, especially if they feel it is an unfair case to debate. At this point, you would have to decide whether or not the proposed case was fair or if you should accept the opposing team's interpretation.

Speakers & Timing

During each debate there are two teams: the government team, which defends the resolution and the opposition team, which opposes the resolution. The government team is made up of the prime minister and the member of government. The opposition team is made up of the leader of the opposition and the member of the opposition. The structure of the debate is as follows:

Prime Minister Constructive (PMC) – 7 minutes
Leader of Opposition Constructive (LOC) – 7 minutes
Member of Government Constructive (MGC) – 7 minutes
Member of Opposition Constructive (MOC) – 7 minutes
Leader of Opposition Rebuttal (LOR) – 5 minutes
Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR) – 5 minutes

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You'll probably notice two things almost immediately when looking at the debate structure. First, there is one speaker on each side (the prime minister and the leader of the opposition) who get to speak twice; there is also one speaker on each side (the member of government and the member of the opposition) who will only be speaking once. Also, towards the end of the debate there are two opposition speeches in a row (the Member of Opposition Constructive followed immediately by the Leader of Opposition Rebuttal).

As with all other forms of debate, the constructive speeches are the place to "construct new arguments." The rebuttal speeches are a place where the debaters focus on where they are winning the round. No new arguments are allowed in the rebuttals, though new examples are allowed to support old arguments.

Think on Your Toes

The debaters only receive the resolution 20 minutes before they must debate it. They have no idea what the resolution will be and must come up with all their arguments during the 20 minutes before the round. There is no "preparation time" once the round begins. As soon as one speaker finishes speaking, the next speaker must rise and give the next speech. Furthermore, no printed evidence is allowed in the debating chambers. Debaters must come up with arguments on their own; they must use their own brains, rather than using the brains of a professor, philosopher, or think tank.

Informality

One of the fun points of parliamentary debate is that it is relatively more relaxed than other forms of debate. Don't be surprised if debaters start banging the table and yelling "hear, hear!" as they hear arguments that they like. Similarly, don't be alarmed if debaters start jeering "shame, shame!" when they hear arguments that they do not like.

Points of Information

One uniqueness of parliamentary debate is that it has no formalized cross-examination period. Instead, any speaker may rise during any of his or her opponent's speeches. The current speaker has discretion over whether he or she will choose to yield the floor to the person who wishes to ask a question.

You may notice that some of the debaters will do a silly motion while rising for a question, involving placing one hand on his or her head and the other hand motioning towards the current speaker; this is a relic left from the British Parliamentary system. The politicians of the days of yore wore really big wigs on their heads and if they were to suddenly rise, their wigs might go flying across the room. The questioner, when rising, must thus hold his or her wig down while showing an open hand to the current speaker (in order to indicate, of course, that he or she is unarmed and will not stab Madame Prime Minister!)

Generally speaking, it is good form for each speaker to take two or so questions from the opposing team. Taking fewer questions is a sign of weakness because it shows that the speaker is afraid of letting the other team make a point during his or her speech. Taking more questions is also a sign of weakness, though, as it shows that the current speaker is willing to let the other team dominate his or her speech time. This is just a guideline; there is no rule on how many questions a speaker must take (or not take).

Taking Notes/"Flowing"

During the round, you will want to take active notes of the arguments being made through the round. You should draw five columns on your sheet of paper: the first column is the PMC (Prime Minister Constructive), the second is the LOC (Leader of Opposition Constructive), the third the MGC (Member of Government Constructive), the fourth the MOC/LOR (the two opposition speeches in a row—the Member of Opposition Constructive and the Leader of Opposition Rebuttal), and the final column is the PMR (the Prime Minister Rebuttal).

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It helps if you flow each argument of the PMC in order, putting each argument on a new line. Then during the LOC, when s/he responds to an argument, you should put the argument in the LOC column right next to the PMC argument. Draw an arrow pointing to the PMC argument, showing that the LOC responded to it. Here is an example of one possible flow if the resolution were *This House would abolish the Electoral College in the United States of America*.

PMC	LOC	MGC	MOC/LOR	PMR
Undermines the idea of “one person, one vote”	America is not a centralized state but a federation of states. It makes sense to vote as a federation of states.	This is inherently undemocratic. In a democracy, every vote ought to be heard—even if we are a federation of states		They dropped this argument. For the United States to be a democracy, it must abolish the Electoral College
Candidates only campaign in “swing states” and avoid campaigning in “safe states” such as California	Candidates would still only campaign in certain states. They would only campaign in large states such as California, New York, and Texas. They will ignore rural America.		Dropped argument. Candidates will not enter rural America. This means a vast decline in certain lifestyles in America and ultimately decrease diversity.	
The Electoral College inhibits third parties since a candidate only becomes important when he or she wins an entire state. Without an Electoral College, third parties can gradually grow by gaining higher proportions of the nation’s vote.	This is true. But a two-party system is good for America. When there are only two parties, it forces both parties to be more centrist. With a multitude of parties, they will run the political spectrum with some being very extreme.	This is not true. Even if extreme opinions are formed, the people will not vote for them and this will decrease the appeal of such parties.	The fact of the matter is that extreme opinions are more likely to surface with more than two parties active. Even if they are not elected in most circumstance, the chances of them being elected are higher without an Electoral College. No one foresaw an election of Hitler until after it happened.	The claim that Hitler will emerge in a multi-party system is completely unwarranted. Look to the United Kingdom where many different (non-Hitler) parties exist. Extreme parties will never be elected, regardless of presence or absence of an Electoral College

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Speaker of the House

You, as the judge and adjudicator, are the Speaker of the House. Don't be surprised if the debaters refer to you as Mister or Madame Speaker. As Speaker of the House, you also have the option to the privilege of acknowledging the debaters before and after they speak. For example, you might say "I bring this house to order and call upon the right and honorable Prime Minister to indulge us in seven minutes of her eloquence!" Or you might say "I thank the Prime Minister for her eloquent remarks and beg the Leader of the Opposition to engage us in seven minutes of his eloquence." However you want to phrase the words is perfectly fine within the confines of the debate round. Have fun with the format; unless you are Dennis Hastert or Newt Gingrich, it's not often that you get to be Speaker of the House!

Completing the Ballot

There are two things you need to rank on the ballot and they are not necessarily intertwined. First, you must decide who won the round. Who was more persuasive? Who was more believable? This should *not* be a measurement of who you most agreed with. The debaters did not get to decide which side of the resolution to uphold and may not be arguing what they believe in! You should not vote against them just because they had the tougher side to argue. Vote for whoever was more persuasive in their side of the resolution.

Second, though, you must decide how each speaker was individually. This is separate from who may have won the round and you *can* give higher speaker points to the losers than you gave to the winners (such a scenario is called a "low-point win" or an LPW). For example, if two are not very good speakers but they are still making all the right, intelligent points, they may win with low speaker points. Similarly, there may be very polished, articulate, and engaging speakers who just aren't making very good arguments; these debaters may receive high speaker points and the loss.

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