

Debating

English Language Arts

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What is a debate?

A *Debate* is an argument with rules. It is a formal process which allows two or more individuals with opposing views to discuss and decide issues and differences. The participants are called *debaters*, and they use persuasion techniques in order to win the appeal of the audience. Debates often involve two teams of two people speaking in a specific order; this is just one type of debate.

The outcome of a debate may be decided by judges, by the audience, or by a combination of both.

Benefits for students

By participating in debates, students will develop several of the following skills:

- analytical thinking
- collaboration and teamwork
- critical thinking
- differentiating fact from opinion
- identifying bias
- organization
- public speaking
- research
- the art of persuasion



Structure of the teams

When debating, there are two teams consisting of usually two people. These teams will argue a resolution, which is the basic topic of discussion. Individual speakers of a team are referred to as its *First Speaker* and *Second Speaker*.

Affirmative team (or Proposition/"Government" in the Parliamentary debate format): Those in favour of the resolution.

Negative team (or Opposition in the Parliamentary debate format): Those against the resolution.

Formats for public debate

There are numerous different formats for public debate, each with its advantages and disadvantages. Popular formats include:

- Australia-Asia debate
- Classical debate
- Comedy debate
- Extemporaneous debate
- Impromptu debate
- Karl Popper debate
- Lincoln-Douglas debate
- Moot court and mock trial
- National Debate Tournament
- Canadian National Debate Tournament
- Parliamentary debate
- Policy debate
- Public forum
- Simulated legislature
- Team policy debate
- ... others

For most of these formats, you may have a *prepared* or an *impromptu* debate. Typically, an impromptu debate only gives the teams about 10 minutes to prepare, while the prepared debate gives the teams hours, days, or weeks to prepare themselves.

In Canadian high schools, the two most popular formats for public debate are the Canadian National Debate Tournament and the Parliamentary Debate. There are some things however that all debate formats have in common:

1. There is a resolution that provides the basic topic of discussion.
2. All debates are divided into two portions – the Constructive and the Rebuttal. The Constructive portion is first and is where arguments are constructed and presented. The Rebuttal is last and is where the debate is summarized.
3. There are two teams. The Affirmative (or Government) team and the Negative (or Opposition) team.
4. The Affirmative (or Government) team always speaks first and last.
5. The Affirmative (or Government) team always has the worry to prove its side.
6. The debate closes with final rebuttals from both teams. A *rebuttal* is a statement that contradicts the accuracy of the other team’s statement, or a statement which summarizes a team’s respective position.

The Parliamentary debate format

The Parliamentary debate format is similar to British parliamentary procedures. Universities in many parts of the world, especially in Australia, Canada, India, and the United Kingdom, have debating championships based on this format. Emphasis in this form of debate is on humour, persuasiveness, rhetorical skills, and wit.

Parliamentary debates are typically impromptu, where the resolution is not given until approximately 10 minutes before the debate begins.

The proposition team is called the "Government," and the opposition team is simply called the "Opposition." The Government team is made up of two debaters: the Prime Minister (PM) and the Member of Government (MG). The Opposition team is also made up of two debaters: the Leader of the Opposition (LO) and the Member of the Opposition (MO).

As outlined below, a round of parliamentary debate consists of 6 speeches totalling 40 minutes.

Speech	Prime Minister Constructive (PMC)	Leader of Opposition Constructive (LOC)	Member of Government Constructive (MG)	Member of Opposition Constructive (MO)	Leader of Opposition Rebuttal (LOR)	Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)
Time	7 min.	8 min.	8 min.	8 min.	4 min.	5 min.

During speeches, other debaters can rise to interject a “Point of information”, a “Point of order”, or a “Point of personal privilege”.

Point of information: During a speech, a debater from the other team may rise from his seat and interject by saying, "Point of information, sir?" At this time the speaker has the option of accepting or rejecting the point of information. It is good practice to accept at least two points of information per speech. If the speaker accepts the point, then the person who rose may ask a question to the speaker. The speaker could then choose to answer the question, ignore it if he cannot come up with a good answer, or reply with a rhetorical question. The speaker then continues with his

speech. A point of information is not permitted during the first or last minute of any speech and is only allowed in constructive speeches. They are not permitted during the rebuttals.



Point of order: A debater may rise on a point of order when he believes that one of the rules of debate has been broken. A point of order is often used to say that the speaker is bringing up new argument in a rebuttal speech, which is not permitted. An interjection is made by rising and saying something like, "Point of order, argument X is a new argument." The judge will make a judgment as to whether the point of order is valid. If so, the judge says, "point well taken." The speaker must then stop making argument X. If not, the judge says, "point not well taken" and the speaker continues with his argument. The procedure is similar for other points of order.

Point of personal privilege: Although rarely used, a debater may request a personal favour or exception from the judge. A debater may also protest a major misrepresentation of one's statements or an attack on one's character. When a debater's speech makes an attack on another debater's statement, the later can interject by saying something like, "Point of personal privilege! I merely said that ..." The judge will make a ruling and respond with either "point well-taken" or "point not-well-taken."

The Canadian National Debate Tournament format

Debaters typically deliver an abundance of evidence very quickly. The complete debating format is described in the attached document and summarized in the table below.

Speech	First Proposition Speaker (Constructive Speech)	First Opposition Speaker (Constructive Speech)	Second Proposition Speaker (Constructive Speech)	Second Opposition Speaker (Constructive Speech)	First Opposition Speaker (Summary/Rebuttal)	First Proposition Speaker (Summary/Rebuttal)
Time	8 min.	8 min.	8 min.	8 min.	4 min.	4 min.

The Speeches and Rebuttal

1st Affirmative Speech

1. Introduction
2. Resolution
3. Definitions
4. Needs for Change
5. Introduce Plan

2nd Affirmative Speech

1. Introduction
2. Clash with points made by Negative and rebuild Affirmative case
3. Present Plan

Rebuttal

During the rebuttal, debaters should:

1. Explain why their team should win and the other team should lose.
2. Remind the judges of their arguments. They should tell the judges why the judges should believe their arguments even after the other team's attack.
3. Remember to use effective persuasion techniques.

1st Negative Speech

1. Introduction
2. If necessary, attacks definitions
3. Clash with Needs for Change
4. Explain why status quo is good

2nd Negative Speech

1. Introduction
2. Continue attack on Affirmative

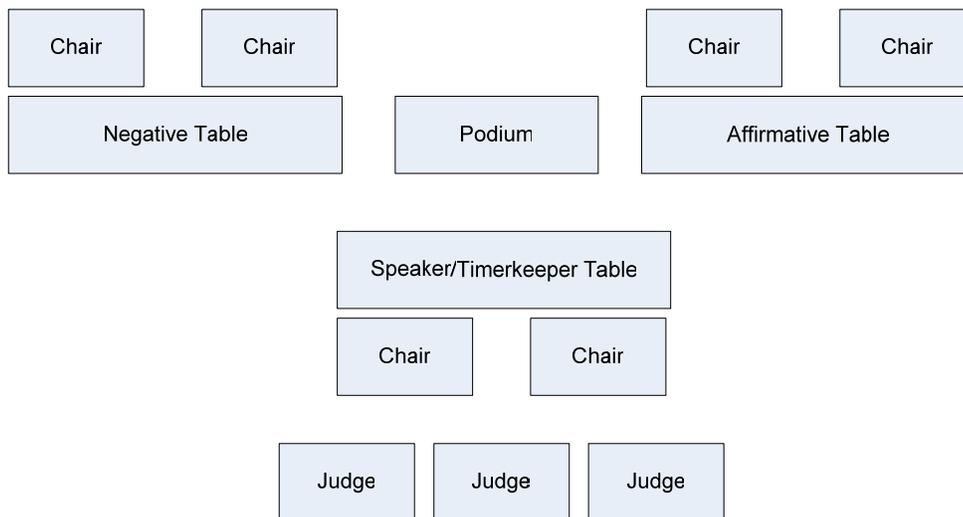
In-class debates

Because of time constraints, we will use the following format for in-class debates. We can therefore have 4 debates per class period.

Speech	First Affirmative Speaker (Constructive Speech)	First Negative Speaker (Constructive Speech)	Second Affirmative Speaker (Constructive Speech)	Second Negative Speaker (Constructive Speech)	Break for preparation	First Negative Speaker (Negative Rebuttal)	First Affirmative Speaker (Affirmative Rebuttal)
Time	2 min.	2 min.	2 min.	2 min.	2 min.	2 min.	2 min.

Floor layout for a debate

Since teams may vary in size, and since the roles of the chairperson and of the timekeeper could be combined, the following floor layout for debates may be changed.



Additional Resources

Alberta Debate and Speech Association: <http://www.compumart.ab.ca/adebate/main.htm>

Canadian Student Debating Federation: <http://www.csd-fcde.ca/>

Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate: <http://www.cusid.ca/>

Carleton Debating: <http://carletondebate.org/xerxes>

Manitoba Speech and Debate Association: <http://www.sjr.mb.ca/debate/>

National (US) Parliamentary Debate League: <http://npdl.net>

Ontario Student Debating Union: <http://www.osdu.on.ca>

Provincial Championship Website: <http://www.osdu.on.ca/provincialchamp/>

The Moderator's script

Before beginning the debate, the exact resolution and names of the all the debaters are clearly written on the board or on a large piece of charting paper. The Moderator script follows.

This debate will come to order.

The resolution before us today is _____.

Representing the Affirmative [Proposition] team are its First Speaker _____ and the Second Speaker _____.

Representing the Negative [Opposition] team are its First Speaker _____ and the Second Speaker _____.

On behalf of the house, I would like to welcome our judge(s): _____, _____, and _____.

I, _____, am your Moderator.

Each speaker will deliver a __ minute constructive speech. The first speaker of each team will get a __ minute summary and rebuttal speech. [Points of information will be allowed during the constructive speeches only, but not during the first and last minute of the speeches. I will bang the desk after the first minute, and again with one minute remaining, to signal the time during which Points of Information may be raised.] For each speech, __ seconds grace will be allowed. After each speech, I will immediately call upon the next debater to begin his or her address. [There will be no Points of Order or Points of Privilege.] Are there any questions regarding the rules? (ANSWER ANY THAT ARE RAISED)

I call upon the First Speaker to introduce the Affirmative [Proposition] case for __ minutes. (SPEECH IS GIVEN) I thank the member for his/her remarks.

We shall now hear the First Speaker for the Negative [Opposition]. (SPEECH IS GIVEN) I thank the member for his/her remarks.

I now call upon the Second Speaker for the Affirmative [Proposition] team. (SPEECH IS GIVEN) I thank the member for his/her remarks.

The Second Negative [Opposition] speaker will now deliver the last speech opposing the case. (SPEECH IS GIVEN) I thank the opposition speaker.

At this time, the first speaker for each side will deliver a __ minute summary and rebuttal speech. No new information may be introduced during these speeches. We will start with the first Negative [Opposition] Speaker. (SPEECH IS GIVEN)

We will now hear the Affirmative's [Proposition's] final summary and rebuttal, to be delivered by the First Speaker, for __ minutes. (SPEECH IS GIVEN) I thank the member for concluding the debate.

Judges, please complete your ballots. After doing so, you are invited to make constructive comments. Remember judges, while making your comments, do not indicate which team has won the debate. (JUDGE'S COMMENTS)

Thank you judges for your assistance and thank you members of the house for your good behaviour. Congratulations all debaters for your performance.

I declare this debate officially concluded.