



GENERAL RULES FOR DEBATE

(as of October 14th, 2007)

01. A Director appointed by the organization conducting any debating tournament shall prescribe the resolutions, schedules, composition of teams, speaking times, and Procedural Regulations for the tournament and where any dispute arises regarding the interpretation of the rules or regulations, his or her decision on the matter shall be final. All unilingual tournament debates shall be governed by these General Rules, the rules for the specific style of debating involved, and the Procedural Regulations prescribed for the tournament by the Director.
02. The topic of every debate (the "resolution" or "proposition") shall be worded in a positive manner. Resolutions may range from propositions of policy (that is, ones proposing a course of action) to statements of fact, value, prediction, explanation or interpretation. Only resolutions for Parliamentary style debates are required to be propositions of policy.
03. A moderator shall preside over every debate, and wherever possible, shall not also judge or keep time. His or her role is merely to maintain order and enforce the rules: he or she should not take an active part in the debate unless this is necessary to protect the rights of a participant. Decisions of moderators are final and cannot be appealed; debaters shall accept such rulings without question and should always obey the proper orders of a moderator. The Director may appoint a Head Judge to assist the moderator.
04. Every debate shall involve two opposing teams: an affirmative side that supports the resolution and a negative team which contests its validity or proposes an alternative solution to the problem involved. The moderator shall sit between the teams, with the affirmative side seated to his or her right as he or she faces them.
05. In every debate, each team shall have an equal amount of speaking time, and in every debate in which individual debaters are competing for prizes or ranking, each student shall have an equal amount of speaking time.
06. A timekeeper shall be present at each debate: his or her function is to time all speeches, indicate to debaters during their addresses how much speaking time they have remaining, and allow extra time for interruptions. When a debater has exhausted his or her speaking time and a 15-second period of grace (if applicable), the moderator shall require the debater to terminate his or her speech.
07. Debates should be judged by a minimum of three adjudicators, none of whom is known to be biased against any team. Judges should sit apart at several different locations in the debate room and should not confer before scoring the contest.
08. Debates should be judged objectively (that is, on the speeches of the debaters as opposed to the previous knowledge, personal opinions, or prejudices of judges).

09. Except in championship or impromptu rounds, debaters shall argue both sides of a resolution an equal number of times in the same style of debate.

10. Debating shall be continuous unless the schedule includes an intermission before official rebuttals begin. Moderators may pause briefly between speeches to give judges an opportunity to make notes and keep their scoring current; however, in Cross-Examination debate, there shall be no pause between a constructive speech and the subsequent cross-examination.

11. It is impossible for there to be a tie in debating: the side bearing the onus of persuasion must discharge that burden or lose. Except when the negative introduces a Counter-Plan, the onus of persuasion lies upon the affirmative team. In the case of a Counter-Plan, the burden shifts: the negative assumes the onus of persuasion and so must discharge it or lose.

Except in Cross-Examination style, in any prepared debate on a proposition of policy, the affirmative team must propose a Plan which would produce a significant change from the status quo. A Plan or Counter-Plan must at least be outlined during the first speech of the team proposing it and be completely described before the team's last constructive speech. A Plan or Counter-Plan may be introduced informally (that is, it requires no formal motion of amendment or seconder); it must be shown to be feasible but not necessarily legal or constitutional.

A Counter-Plan may be proposed only if the affirmative has already introduced a Plan. A Counter-Plan must be proven to be an alternative solution to the problem addressed by the resolution, significantly different from the affirmative proposal, a significant change from the status quo, and demonstrably more desirable than the affirmative Plan.

12. Except in a mock trial involving a criminal charge (in which case the accused is innocent until proven guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt"), the standard of proof required to discharge the onus of persuasion is "on the balance of probabilities" (that is, such a case as would convince a reasonable person that the resolution is more likely to be true than false). Except in the case of an absolute resolution, the team bearing the burden of proof must prove only that the resolution is true in the majority of cases or as a general proposition.

13. Debaters should always conduct themselves with dignity and be courteous towards other debaters and officials. Debaters must not disrupt an opponent's speech by any interruptions or distractions (such as loud whispering, shuffling of shoes, rustling of papers, grimacing, affected laughter, etc.).

14. Debaters may introduce any visual aids or other real evidence they desire during a debate, but such evidence is thereafter available for use by their opponents.

15. Debaters may not make personal comments about other debaters; otherwise, they may speak on any topics they like, provided that they do not offend any Canadian laws, including those against obscenity, blasphemy, sedition, defamation and contempt of court. They should, however, confine their remarks to the resolution being debated, any Counter-Plan, and the speeches of other debaters since the judges will reject any comments not relevant to the debate. While judges must consider all contentions advanced by debaters, they may summarily dismiss unsubstantiated assertions or purely emotional appeals. Though all arguments introduced stand until proven wrong, it is up to the judges to decide how much weight they carry. If one team has posed a serious question relevant to the debate and the other side has neither satisfactorily answered the query nor justified its failure to do so, the point in issue may be considered to have been won by the side which asked the question.

16. Except for reasonable role-playing purposes and imagination in impromptu debates, all assertions of fact by debaters must be accurate and debaters must be prepared to cite specific authority (publication, page, author, date, etc.) for all such assertions immediately upon being challenged to do so. The actual publication need not be produced or screened in advance of the debate by the moderator. Judges will penalize debaters severely for using inaccurate evidence and, if a judge is certain that a debater has deliberately fabricated or falsified evidence, he or she should report this to the Director as quickly as possible. The penalty for fabrication or falsification of evidence is disqualification from eligibility to win any prize or distinction during the tournament.

17. Definition of the terms of the resolution must not produce a truism or a tautology or delete an absolute term. When a negative team challenges affirmative definitions on the basis that they reduce the resolution to a truism or tautology, the negative must propose alternative definitions that it considers reasonable during its first speech. An affirmative team accused of defining a truism or tautology may wait until its final rebuttal speech to show how its definitions are not truistic or tautological. A resolution may be defined by paraphrase or interpreted with formal definitions.

Defining the terms of a resolution is the prerogative and responsibility of the affirmative team: if it fails to do so expressly or by clear implication during its first speech, it must accept any reasonable definitions proposed by the negative team during its first address.

A team which considers the other team's definitions unreasonable must challenge them in its speech immediately following the introduction of those definitions; otherwise it is deemed to accept the other team's interpretation of the resolution. If the first or second speakers for both sides fail to define the terms, the foregoing rules apply to each succeeding pair of speakers. When definitions are disputed for the entire debate, judges will accept the interpretation of the resolution best supported by reasoning and evidence. If there is no other clash between affirmative and negative cases, the debate must be decided solely on the issue of the interpretation of terms.

“Squirrelling” is the tactic employed by a debater to define the terms of the resolution, topic or question in an abstruse fashion inconsistent and disassociated with usual definitions. Squirrelling is not permitted in prepared rounds. Squirrelling is permitted but not required in impromptu rounds on condition that clear links be made between the resolution and the case offered by the affirmative. In an impromptu debate, the affirmative team must provide the negative team with its definitions at least ten minutes before the debate begins.

18. Place-setting and time-setting are not permitted. Place-setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular place. Time-setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular time, past or future. Unless otherwise specified by the Director, the place shall be deemed to be where the debate is being held and the time shall be deemed to be the present.

19. Debaters have a duty to clash and judges should severely penalize those who present only canned cases. While "rebuttal" is sometimes used to mean only attack on opposing arguments and evidence and "refutation" to refer only to defence of one's own arguments and evidence, in these rules "rebuttal" is used in a wider sense which includes "refutation". Rebuttal is not restricted to the official rebuttal periods: debaters may attack their opponents' arguments or evidence anytime during their speeches. During a final affirmative official rebuttal, however, no new constructive argument or evidence may be introduced.

In the Cambridge format of rebuttal, each debater delivers a constructive address and later an official rebuttal whereas in the Oxford format, only the first affirmative debater delivers an official rebuttal and all other debaters must incorporate their rebuttal into their speeches. While either format may be used in any style of debate, it is traditional in Parliamentary style to employ the Oxford format.

20. Only debaters and officials may speak during a contest. If able, debaters shall stand to deliver all speeches, including asking and answering questions in Cross-Examination debate and raising Points of Information in Worlds style Academic debate. Heckling, however, is done without standing.

21. Debaters must not read their speeches, though they may make reasonable reference to notes or read verbatim quotations. Judges shall penalize debaters for excessive reading or memorization which results in stilted or unnatural delivery.

22. Debaters must not be coached during a debate. Debaters may not communicate with or prompt a colleague who is speaking, nor shall such a speaker consult them for assistance. Debaters shall prepare for impromptu topics without assistance from coaches and shall do their own research for prepared topic debates. No laptop computers are allowed during any debates except in the case of a debater with a physical disability. The only research materials permitted in an impromptu debate are a dictionary, thesaurus and collection of quotations.

23. Debaters should not unnecessarily repeat arguments or evidence. A debater may introduce and review his or her important points with impunity, however, since this repetition can provide emphasis and clarity.

24. Throughout these Rules, the singular shall be construed to include and be read in the plural whenever appropriate.

Rules for Academic Debate

01. Academic style debating is sometimes referred to as "Classical" or "Platform" style debating. In this style, each debater is expected to deliver a constructive speech and to rebut. In Cambridge format, each debater enjoys a separate rebuttal speech; in Oxford format, only the first affirmative debater has an official rebuttal and all other debaters should incorporate rebuttal into their constructive speech.

02. The moderator grants the right to speak by introducing a debater. Once he or she has the floor, a debater is obliged to surrender it only when ordered to do so by the moderator. Usually this occurs only after a serious breach of the rules or when the debater has exceeded his or her allotted time.

03. Debaters should always preface their remarks by addressing the moderator ("Mr. [or Madam] Moderator"); they may also acknowledge the presence of "Honourable Judges, Worthy Opponents, Ladies and Gentlemen", though this is not mandatory. All references to other debaters should be made in the third person.

04. Moderators should be quick to call debaters to order for any breaches of the rules and judges should not hesitate to penalize debaters for remarks made in bad taste or any violations of the rules.

05. Since there are no Points of Order or Privilege, at the conclusion of each debate the moderator will give each debater an opportunity to point out any infraction of the rules or

misrepresentation of his or her position by his or her opponents. When alleging such an infraction, a debater must identify the specific debate rule that has been broken or his or her remark that has been misconstrued and the debater accused of the violation or misrepresentation should be given an opportunity to defend himself or herself. The Moderator shall not rule on any such objections.

06. Unless the Director otherwise prescribes, heckling of a speaking debater is permitted except for debates where World's Points of Information are being used. When allowed, heckling should be pertinent, humorous, brief and infrequent, and it should not be used just to disrupt the delivery of an opponent. Judges will severely penalize debaters who lower the level of debate through excessive or thoughtless interruptions.

07. Where permitted, Points of Information as used at the World Schools Debating Championships shall be entertained. Such a Point of Information may be in the form of either a question to the debater making a speech or a remark addressed through the moderator. All debaters are required to raise at least one such point with each opponent during each contest and while the debater who is interrupted is required to accept at least one point raised by each opponent, he or she has sole discretion whether and when to accept them and how long to let them go on. Points of Information must be brief and may not be raised during the first or final minute of a constructive speech or during a rebuttal-defence-summary speech. To raise a Point of Information, a debater shall stand and say "Point of Information"; the interrupted debater may decline to take the point and cut off or ask the interrupter to sit down, accept the point immediately, or defer it until later in the speech. If several debaters raise such points simultaneously, the speaker with the floor may refuse to accept any of them or may entertain one. A debater whose point is not accepted shall immediately sit down. Excessive raising of such points shall be penalized. The time taken to raise and reply to such Points shall be included in the speaking time of the debater with the floor. If a debater speaks for more than a minute less than his or her allotted time, any unraised Point of Information may be asked at the conclusion of the speech.

Rules for Cross-Examination Debate

01. Cross-Examination style requires all debaters to ask and answer questions as well as to perform the usual functions of a debater. "Cross-Examination" means simply the questioning of an opponent: the questioner is referred to as the "examiner" while the "witness" replies to the queries.

02. The resolution for a cross-examination debate may take the form of a question; in this case, the affirmative team supports an affirmative answer to that question.

03. Debaters shall refer to the moderator by title ("Mr. Moderator" or "Madam Moderator") but may refer to one another by their given names.

04. Debaters shall treat one another with dignity and judges should penalize debaters guilty of flippancy, discourtesy, browbeating or any attempt to belittle another debater. The moderator shall also attempt to protect debaters from such abuse.

05. The examiner shall control a cross-examination, though a witness has the right to reasonably qualify his or her answers. The examiner should allow the witness reasonable opportunity to answer questions but may ask the moderator to cut the witness short if the latter stalls or answers at unnecessary length.

06. The only question that a witness may ask during cross-examination is for a confusing question to be clarified. He or she may not answer a question by asking a question.

07. The examiner should ask fair questions on relevant subjects, but questions need not relate to the speech just delivered by the witness. Unless the examiner or his or her colleagues relate them to the resolution during the debate, of course, the question may carry no weight with the judges.

08. Witnesses must try to answer all questions directly and honestly: they should be penalized for evading questions or giving untruthful answers. Witnesses may not object to answering questions on the grounds that they are irrelevant or unfair.

09. The moderator shall not intervene when irrelevant remarks are made but if they are in response to a pertinent question, on the request of the examiner, he or she shall order the witness to answer the question directly.

10. During a cross-examination, examiners may only ask questions; accordingly, they should be penalized for making speeches or rebutting at this time. Judges shall evaluate examiners solely on their ability to elicit admissions from witnesses and must disregard any argument or evidence introduced by an examiner during a cross-examination period.

11. No heckling, Points of Order or Privilege, or other interjections are permitted. At the conclusion of each debate the moderator will give each debater an opportunity to point out any infractions of the rules or misrepresentation of his or her position by his or her opponents. When alleging such an infraction, a debater must identify the specific debate rule that has been broken or his or her remark that has been misconstrued and the debater accused of the violation or misrepresentation should be given an opportunity to defend himself or herself. The Moderator shall not rule on any such objections.

12. The functions of rebuttal, defence and summarization may be divided by the members of each team and, if so, judges will score debaters on how well they discharge their respective responsibilities.

Rules for Parliamentary Debate

01. The moderator of a Parliamentary debate is called the "Speaker" and all debaters must address themselves to "Mr. [or Madam] Speaker" at the outset of their speeches. The affirmative side is called the "Government" while the "Opposition" represents the negative. Participants in the debate and members of the audience are referred to collectively as the "House" while the resolution is simply termed the "Bill".

Debaters must always refer to one another in the third person (for example, "the Prime Minister", "Leader of the Opposition", "Minister of Communications", "Honourable Member from Ecum Secum", "second speaker for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition"), preferably by position. They must not call other debaters by their real names.

02. The House shall be assumed to be the House of Commons of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada at the present time unless otherwise specified by the Director, though debaters are not assumed to be the particular politicians or parties currently in power or opposition.

03. When reprimanded by the Speaker, a debater should immediately apologize to the House. If a member becomes unruly or refuses to obey him or her, the Speaker may have the Sergeant-at-

Arms remove the offender from the House by "naming" him or her (that is, referring to him or her by his or her real name). A debater who has been expelled from a contest in this manner may not return to the House for the duration of the debate, except with the permission of the Director.

04. Debaters shall not use any unparliamentary language (that is, foul, profane or offensive language or words abusing the House, any member thereof, the King or Queen, or a government official).

05. Only one debater at a time may hold the floor of the House. As soon as another member rises and addresses himself or herself to the Speaker, an interrupted debater shall surrender the floor by sitting down. When the Speaker rises to his or her feet, all debaters must immediately cease speaking and resume their seats.

06. Except for heckling, every debater desiring to speak shall rise in his or her place with his or her head uncovered (with the exception of religious head gear) and address himself or herself to the Speaker. Such a debater shall not continue to speak until being recognized and called upon to do so by the Speaker.

07. Only verbal heckling by debaters is permitted, but this is encouraged as long as it is pertinent, humorous, brief and infrequent. While wit is welcome, however, it should not be used just to disrupt the delivery of an opponent and the judges will severely penalize debaters who lower the level of debate through excessive or thoughtless heckling (such as inane use of the question "Source?"). Debaters may heckle only opponents who hold the floor; no cross-bench heckling is allowed.

08. A member may raise only two types of points: Points of Order and Points of Privilege. There may be only one point on the floor at a time; points are not debatable and the Speaker will rule on each independently. The time taken to raise, consider and rule on any point shall not be included in the interrupted debater's speaking time. Continual use of trivial points should be penalized.

(a) A Point of Order may be raised to draw the Speaker's attention to a breach of any of the rules of debating except repetition or irrelevance, and may involve misconduct by a person other than the debater interrupted. While a debater must raise such a point immediately after a rule has been contravened, the Speaker may also call a member to order on his or her own initiative.

(b) Points of Privilege include misquoting or misrepresenting an opponent (but not misinterpreting his or her remarks), referring to a member incorrectly, and slandering a member. No member may raise such a point on behalf of another member.

To raise a Point of Order, a debater shall stand and say, "Mr. [or Madam] Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order." A debater who is interrupted by such an objection shall immediately surrender the floor by sitting down. The Speaker will then recognize the complainant and request, "Please explain your point." After the complainant has explained his or her objection, the Speaker shall rule whether the point was "Well taken" (valid) or "Not well taken". Finally, the Speaker will call upon the interrupted debater to continue delivering his or her speech. Similar procedures are to be followed for Points of Privilege.

GENERAL RULES FOR BILINGUAL DEBATE

01. All bilingual debates shall be governed by the General Rules for Debate, with the exceptions as noted in the following bilingual rules.

02. All participants, including the moderator, shall speak both English and French during the debate. The amounts of time to be spent in each language shall be prescribed by the Director for each style of bilingual debating involved.

03. In Bilingual Debate, both the English and French translations of the resolution, topic or question to be debated shall be simultaneously available to participants at the time of announcement of the resolution, topic or question.

04. Before the debate begins, and before the timekeeper starts timing, the key terms of the resolution shall be defined in both languages by a member of the affirmative team. Rule 17 of the General Rules of Debating applies and the negative side should be prepared to accept a reasonable set of definitions.

Rules for Bilingual Academic Debate

01. In a bilingual Academic debate, each debater shall speak twice, once to give a constructive speech and a second time to give his or her official rebuttal. The constructive speech may also contain rebuttal if desired. The remaining rules of unilingual Cambridge style Academic debate also apply, with the following exceptions.

02. The General Rules for Bilingual Debate apply.

03. Either French or English may be used in the constructive speech. The entire speech must be delivered in the same language; the debaters shall not switch from one language to another during the constructive speech. Notwithstanding this rule, debaters may introduce and quote material in either language during the debate.

04. The other language must be used for the rebuttal speech. The entire official rebuttal shall be delivered in one language.

05. When a Point of Information is given, it shall be given in the language being spoken and answered in that same language.

Rules for Bilingual Cross-Examination Debate

01. In a bilingual Cross-Examination debate, each debater shall speak twice, once to give a constructive speech and a second time to give his or her official rebuttal. The constructive speech may also contain rebuttal if desired. Each debater shall also be required to ask and answer questions. The remaining rules of unilingual Cross-Examination debate (Cambridge rebuttal) also apply, with the following exceptions.

02. The General Rules for Bilingual Debate apply.

03. Either French or English may be used in the constructive speech. The entire speech must be delivered in the same language; the debater shall not switch from one language to another during the constructive speech. Notwithstanding this rule, debaters may introduce and quote material in either language during the debate.

04. The other language must be used for the rebuttal speech. The entire official rebuttal shall be delivered in one language, subject to the right to introduce and quote material described in Bilingual Cross-Examination Rule 03.

05. During periods of cross-examination, questions may be asked in either French or English, but they must be answered in the language in which they are asked. The examiner may use both French and English during the period of cross-examination, but individual questions shall be asked entirely in one language or the other.

Rules for Bilingual Parliamentary Debate

01. The Rules for Bilingual Parliamentary Debate shall be the same as those for unilingual Parliamentary debating with the following exceptions.

02. The General Rules for Bilingual Debate apply.

03. Each debater shall speak both French and English in the course of his or her speech. If the debater's principal language is English, at least 25% of his or her speech shall be delivered in French, and vice versa. Debaters are encouraged to spend an equal amount of time in both languages.

04. A debater shall not continually switch from one language to another. He or she may choose when to switch to the second language, but this having been done, the debater must continue to speak the second language until the 25% minimum time has been spent.

05. The timekeeper shall keep a record of the time spent in each language. He or she will signal the debaters when the required time has been spent in each language, and, if required by the Speaker, shall advise the judges if the required time was spent in each language.

06. The Prime Minister may deliver his or her constructive speech entirely in one language and the official rebuttal in the other if, in doing so, the 25% second language requirement has been met.

07. All formal interruptions of the debate, as well as heckling, may be in either language.

08. Provided the 25% second language requirement is otherwise met, debaters may introduce and quote material in either language during the debate, notwithstanding Bilingual Parliamentary Rules 03 and 04.