

Claremont SPAR Rules

SPAR, or SPontaneous ARgumentation, is a form of simple debate that is run during a speech round. It requires no specific knowledge, but a little bit of Pop Culture information will help you. Some of the best topics seem a little bit silly, and the round should be both fun and still run with decorum like any other.

The Round: Each SPAR panel consists of approximately 8 competitors. The competitors will be assigned affirmative or negation until all debaters are assigned to a side by the judge prior to the start of the round. Each pair will consider a single issue/resolution which is presented to the debaters by the judge right before each pair debates. There will be one minute of preparation before the affirmative must commence speaking. That is the only preparation time for that pair of competitors. The first affirmative speaker will give a 2-minute speech in favor of the resolution; immediately after that speech, the first negative speaker will refute the position in a 2 minute constructive speech. Following the opening statements, there will be a 5 minute open cross-examination. The pair should first question each other, and then should be prepared to take at least a few questions from the judges and audience. Judges are responsible for keeping this time period orderly. Following the cross-examination, the affirmative will give a 2-minute rebuttal speech followed by negation giving a 2 minute rebuttal speech.

Times: Prep 1 minute; Aff constructive 2 minutes; Neg constructive 2 minutes; cross-examination 5 minutes; Aff rebuttal 2 minutes; Neg rebuttal 2 minutes. Students may time themselves, but the judge should keep the round on schedule.

Judge responsibilities: unlike judges of prepared debate, SPAR judges do not have to render decisions. Judges merely rank the debaters in terms of how they defend their side, the quality of their arguments, and the quality of their presentation, their use of questions, and the like. The judge is also responsible to assign speakers to their various positions. Judges may use Tabroom suggested order, but are empowered to vary those in a way that facilitates the round. For example, if a debater at the top of your ballot does not show up at the start of the round, that debater should not be placed in the first pairing. If an odd number of students shows up for the round, one student may give a repeat additional performance, but should not be ranked higher for giving the additional speech. Answers by debaters to questions from the audience during the open cross-examination period should be used in the scoring of the competitors who are actually debating, but should not be considered relevant in the scoring of those who are merely asking the questions. SPAR should be judged on the basis of overall delivery, persuasion, and quality argument construction.

SPAR Theory: the affirmative should advocate a specific idea, but the app position need only be loosely related to the topic. For example, the affirmative should argue that something is good or bad, true or false, morally correct or immoral, or that something should be done differently or the same. In other words the affirmative should advocate one side of an issue and defend a clear position. The affirmative position should not be truistic (it should not be an argument with which virtually everyone would agree). The debate should not require specific knowledge. The position should be debatable by any reasonably well informed student. Specific knowledge can be used to support a larger position but should not be the focus of the debate. Both sides should defend their position AND refute their opponent. For example with a topic like "Cheetos or Doritos", the affirmation should be telling us why Cheetos are the best and why everything their opponent said about Doritos is wrong. An idiom like "Don't mess with Texas" should see the Aff supporting why we shouldn't mess with them, and the Neg advocating why we should mess with Texas.