

## PARLI PRIMER

Parliamentary debate is a formal contest featuring critical analysis and rhetorical skill. Participants represent the advocates for and against a motion for debate (also known as a resolution or topic). One or more judges deliberate on the outcome of the contest.

A **motion** is presented as the subject for debate. A different topic is used for each round of debate. Two teams, each with two persons and designated as "Proposition" (also known as "Government") and "Opposition", prepare to debate the topic. The teams have twenty minutes of preparation time from the announcement of the motion to prepare for each debate. Students may consult dictionaries, reference materials, and prepared notes during the preparation period. There is no preparation time once the debate commences. No prepared materials—other than handwritten notes—may be brought into the debate round for the debater's use. Debaters are not permitted to read published material in the speeches of the debate to support their argument claims.

There are two types of formal speeches in each round of debate: constructive speeches and rebuttal speeches. The order, formal titles of the speakers, and time limits for each speech are as follows:

First Proposition	7 minutes
First Opposition	8 minutes
Second Proposition	8 minutes
Second Opposition	8 minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	4 minutes
Proposition Rebuttal	5 minutes

The first speaker for each side speaks twice (a constructive speech and a rebuttal speech). The second speaker for each side delivers a single constructive speech.

**Points of Information:** These are common practice in parliamentary debating and serve to make for interactive and challenging debates. A Point of Information is a request by one or more debaters on an opposing team to the speaker holding the floor to yield a portion of her speaking time for a brief statement or clarifying question. To make a point of information, one or both members of the opposing team rise and announce "Information" or "Point of Information". They may also signal non-verbally that they wish to make a point of information. The speaker then has the discretion to accept or refuse the point. If the point is accepted ("I will take your point," for example), the opposing team member directs a statement (often an argument or counterexample) or question to the speaker. The speaker is technically yielding time from her own speech for the point of information and the time for the point is deducted from the speaker holding the floor.

**Points of Information** must be concise statements or questions, lasting no more than fifteen seconds. The speaker accepts a single point; the opposing speaker is not permitted to make following questions or arguments unless again recognized by the speaker holding the floor.

**Points of Information** can only be offered after the first minute and before the last minute of any speech. The judge or designated timekeeper knocks on a desk or table or otherwise

announces that one minute of each speech has elapsed and that one minute of each speech remains, so that the participants know when Points of Information may be presented.

**New arguments** are not permitted in the rebuttal speeches, unless the arguments have a logical foundation established in the constructive speeches. For example, new issues may be presented in the Second Opposition speech. It is appropriate for the Proposition Rebuttalist to answer these issues without fear that the arguments will be identified as "new arguments in the final rebuttal" because the rebuttal speech is the first opportunity that the proposition team has to answer these arguments and the issues have an established foundation in the constructive speeches.

**Summary:** Parliamentary debate is extemporaneous debating on topics that change from debate to debate. Parliamentary debate is a two-person-team debate in which one team, the proposition, supports a motion for debate while the other team, the opposition, opposes it. Contestants debate a wide variety of topics drawn from current events, contemporary culture, domestic and international issues, politics and philosophy. The proposition team has the burden of making and defending a specific case for the motion for debate. The opposition team argues against that case by showing that the case should not be upheld because it is wrong, dangerous, ill-informed, or some combination thereof. Judging should be based on effective argumentation and presentation for one team's side of the motion for debate, taking into account direct and indirect clash of issues, organization, logic, analysis, evidence, and persuasiveness. Topics are announced 20 minutes before the beginning of each debate.