



2025 Harvard College Debating Union Season Opener

Dear Coaches, Debaters, and Parents

On behalf of the Harvard College Debating Union, we are so excited to invite you to the Harvard College Debating Union Season Opener August 30th-31st. Although we believe very strongly in the power of in-person debate, we also understand that for many students, flying to Cambridge can be inaccessible. In this vein, we have decided to make the tournament **entirely online**. The tournament will run over both tabroom and zoom, with more information about zoom links published closer to the tournament.

This year, we will be offering 6 events: Varsity Public Forum, JV Public Forum, Novice Public Forum, Varsity Lincoln Douglas, JV Lincoln Douglas, and Open Parliamentary. We are excited to announce that the finalists in Varsity PF and Varsity LD will get an auto-bid to the Harvard Round Robin hosted in February, and the Parli division will count towards the NYPDL Championship and possibly NPDL-TOC. Moreover, the winners of Open Parliamentary and Varsity PF will also receive a \$1,000 cash prize and the winners of Varsity LD will receive a \$500 cash prize.

Although the finalists of this season opener receive automatic qualification to the Harvard National Speech & Debate Tournament Round Robin to be held in February 2026, that tournament is run by the Harvard Debate Council (the policy team), a separate organization from the Harvard College Debating Union. The two organizations collaborate closely, but beyond the auto-qualifications, the tournaments are unaffiliated. This tournament means a lot to us, and we are committed to providing a fair, timely, and competitive tournament. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to me at zberg@college.harvard.edu.

See you virtually in August!

Sincerely,
Zach Berg
Tournament Director

Novice/JV/Varsity Status

We encourage coaches to estimate skill level and place debaters in the division that best serves their education. With that being said, a novice must be in their first year of competitive high school debate and a JV must be in their first or second year of competitive debate. Your first year of competitive debate is defined by not attending a single high school debate tournament in the prior year. PF and LD will have separate divisions for novice/JV participants, while Parliamentary will have a separate elimination bracket for novice teams.

Breaking Teams

- 1) In all divisions, we will be doing a clean break of all teams that win four out of their 5 preliminary rounds.
- 2) Iron-person teams are not eligible to break in any event
- 3) Teams may iron-person one round in the case of an emergency and still be eligible to break. In the case that a team on 4+ wins has iron-personed more than 2 rounds, the break will be one team smaller. We will not be pulling up any 3-2 teams into elimination rounds.
- 4) Seeding of teams will first be based on the number of rounds won, and then on total speaker points -1HL, followed by your median score (-2HL), followed by your total speaker points.
- 5) We reserve the right to change the break or tiebreakers and will communicate in the case that we do.

Schedule

Eastern Time:

Saturday 8/30

10:00 - 10:25: Equity Briefing

10:25 - 10:30: General assembly (required)

10:30 - 12:15: Round 1

12:15 - 2:00: Round 2

2:00 - 2:45: Lunch

2:45 - 4:30: Round 3

4:30 - 6:15: Round 4

6:15 - 8:00: Round 5

8:15 - 8:30: Award Ceremony/Break Announcement

Sunday 8/31

10:00 - 10:30: Check-In and GA

10:30 - 12:15: Elim 1

12:15 - 2:00: Elim 2

2:00 - 2:45: Lunch

2:45 - 4:30: Elim 3

4:30 - 6:15: Elim 4

6:15 - 8:00: Elim 5

Pacific Time:

Saturday 8/30

7:00 - 7:25: Equity Briefing

7:25 - 7:30: General assembly (required)

7:30 - 9:15: Round 1

9:15 - 11:00: Round 2

11:00 - 11:45: Lunch

11:45 - 1:30: Round 3

1:30 - 3:15: Round 4

3:15 - 5:00: Round 5

5:15 - 5:30: Award Ceremony/Break Announcement

Sunday 8/31

7:00 - 7:30: Check-In and GA

7:30 - 9:15: Elim 1

9:15 - 11:00: Elim 2

11:00 - 11:45: Lunch

11:45 - 1:30: Elim 3

1:30 - 3:15: Elim 4

3:15 - 5:00: Elim 5

Registration

Registration will happen through the tabroom. Registration, **including judge registration**, opens Monday April 14th and closes Friday August 21. We will be levying a \$100 late fee for any judge that is submitted past the deadline. The tab link for the tournament can be found here: https://www.tabroom.com/index/tourn/index.mhtml?tourn_id=35413

Judge Obligations

Each team is required to bring one judge for every two teams, rounded unfavorably — if you are bringing three teams, you must bring two judges. Schools may split up judging requirements between multiple people if they choose. For example, one judge can judge Saturday and another judge can judge Sunday. However, in order to fulfill a judge obligation, judge(s) must be present for all preliminary rounds and one round after their last team has been eliminated from the break. While experienced judges are preferred, judge training is required—please make sure that all judges from your institution understand the basic rules of the format. If you are unable to meet the judge requirement, we will charge \$100 per round that goes uncovered and we reserve the right to break up an entry into two judges in extreme circumstances. We have limited hired judging so please plan accordingly.

All judges must be 18 years of age or older, a high school graduate, and be a proficient English speaker.

Rules

PF/LD

All divisions in Public Forum and Lincoln Douglass will Both will use the September-October National Speech and Debate Association topic and time limits.

Parliamentary

This tournament will use National Parliamentary Debate League Online Round Rules. American parliamentary debate features two 2-person teams in a round, with twenty minutes prep time. For this tournament, we are doing partner prep only (no consulting coaches or other teams during prep). Internet research is allowed during prep time, but once the round starts, the internet may be used only for communication with other round participants, note taking, and accessing notes prepared during prep time. During prep time, you are not able to access files with pre-written notes or backfiles.

Hybrid Teams

Unlike many other national circuit tournaments, we are allowing teams composed of debaters from different schools in all events in order to increase cohesion and community amongst the competitive debate circuit. If you wish to enter as a hybrid team, please enter with **both** school names in tabroom

Equity

The tournament strives to foster an environment promoting inclusivity, respect, and equity. The tournament will abide by Harvard College's policies and procedures for sexual, gender-based, and racial harassment and discrimination. For any concerns about equity throughout the tournament, we will have an anonymous google form and an equity officer on standby. Maria Xu, the Vice President of Equity for the Harvard College Debating Union will be acting as the Director of Equity for this tournament.

Adult Supervision

Every student must be virtually accompanied at the tournament by someone who is over the age of 18. This adult should be authorized by the student's school and/or parent to care for that student in the event of a medical or other emergency. The contact information for this adult must be provided to tournament staff before the tournament in order for students to compete.

Independent Entries

Anyone who attends a high school or middle school is eligible to compete as an independent given that we understand that some schools have not formally started by the time this tournament

takes place. However, independent entries are still responsible for fulfilling their judge obligation and having an adult supervisor.

Paying Fees and Completing Registration

Entry fees are:

- 1) Public Forum Varsity Debate Teams – \$150.00
- 2) Public Forum JV Debate Teams – \$140.00
- 3) Public Forum Novice Debate Teams – \$130.00
- 4) Lincoln Douglas Varsity Debate Teams – \$130.00
- 5) Lincoln Douglas Novice Debate Teams – \$120.00
- 6) Parliamentary Debate Teams – \$90.00

All payment information is on tabroom. We will not allow teams to compete if we have not **received** payment before the start of the tournament. However, we are also committed to this being an accessible tournament. **If the fee is in any way a barrier to your entry please email me (zberg@college.harvard.edu) and our amazing equity director Maria (mariaxu@college.harvard.edu), and we will work with you to make sure you can attend!**

We look forward to seeing you all there!

And if you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to email zberg@college.harvard.edu