2026 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 2nd annual Harvard College Debating Union Season Opener September 5th-6th. 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 5 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 Parli division will count towards the NYPDL Championship and the 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.

This tournament means a lot to us, and we are committed to providing a fair, timely, and competitive tournament. Please reach out to any members of the tournament staff if you have any questions or concerns.

See you virtually in September!

Sincerely,
Harvard College Debating Union

Tournament Staff

If you have any questions at all about our tournament, please contact the tournament director for the format of debate that you are interested in registering for

Name	Position	Email
Haotian Pan	PF Tournament Director	haotianpan@college.harvard.edu
Khumoetsile Molefakgotla	LD Tournament Director	khumomolefakgotla@college.harvard.edu
Zach Berg	Parli Tournament Director	zberg@college.harvard.edu
Maria Xu & Ann Wang	Equity Officers	mariaxu@college.harvard.edu annwang@college.harvard.edu
Clare Rajapakse	Finance Director	crajapakse@college.harvard.edu

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 of their preliminary rounds. If PF and LD, that means that all teams that win 4 out of 6 rounds will break. In Parliamentary that means that all teams that win 4 out of their 5 rounds will break. Novice elimination rounds for LD and Parli will be based on tournament size.
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-peroned more than 2 rounds, the break will be one team smaller.
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

PF/LD Schedule (in ET)

Saturday 9/5

10:00 - 10:25: Equity Briefing

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

10:30 - 12:00 Round 1

12:00 - 1:30 Round 2

1:30 - 2:00 Lunch

2:00 - 3:30 Round 3

3:30 - 5:00 Round 4

5:00 - 6:30 Round 5

6:30 - 8:00 Round 6

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

Sunday 9/6

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

Parliamentary Schedule (in ET)

Saturday 9/5

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 9/6

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

Registration

Registration will happen through the tabroom. Registration, **including judge registration,** opens Wednesday June 3rd at 11:59 PM and closes Sunday August 30th at 11:59 PM. 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=40344

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. You can reach out to her at any time (mariaxu@college.harvard.edu)

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 debate operations 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 – $140.00
2) Public Forum JV Debate Teams – $130.00
3) Public Forum Novice Debate Teams – $120.00
4) Lincoln Douglas Debate Teams – $120.00
5) 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 the tournament director for your event 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!