

Connecticut Debate Association Handbook of Parliamentary Debate

August 2007

Revised September 2009

Revised September 2010

Revised for Parli September 2022

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This document describes the procedures and policies of Parliamentary debate as practiced by the Connecticut Debate Association in its debate tournaments. The Connecticut Debate Association is not responsible for any interpretation or application of the handbook's content in actual practice. The Connecticut Debate Association does not represent or warrant that the actual conduct of any of its debates or debate tournaments will follow these procedures and policies precisely, or that a particular Judge or group of Judges will interpret them consistently in any given debate round. The Connecticut Debate Association reserves the right to depart from these policies and procedures at the discretion of the Tab Director assigned to any tournament, the Association or the Executive Director.

The Connecticut Debate Association would like to acknowledge the work of the many coaches, teachers, students, parents, and other volunteers who have contributed to this work, either directly or through their participation in the many Connecticut Debate Association events over the years.

For more information, please visit the [CDA website](#).

CDA: A Few Questions Answered

What is the Connecticut Debate Association (CDA)?

The CDA is primary high school debate league in Connecticut with roots going back over 50 years. We are an approved activity under the Connecticut Association of Schools. We host monthly tournaments using a parliamentary style of debate. Participation is open to any public or private high school.

What is CDA Parliamentary Debate?

Common to most forms of competitive debate, parliamentary debate is a contest between two teams, one side supporting the motion or topic and the other opposed. Members of each time team speak in turn for a set time to present their case and reply to that of the other side. A Judge or panel of Judges decides the winner based on the arguments presented.

The defining characteristics of the parliamentary style of debate is that intensive research into the topic debated, use of obscure facts or highly technical arguments are discouraged. Parliamentary debate also permits the opposing team to interrupt the speaker with questions during a speech, similar to what occurs in Parliament, rather than having a separate cross-examination period. Various forms of parliamentary debate are the most common format at the high school level internationally and at the college level world-wide. Parli is rising in popularity at the the high school and middle school level in the United States.

CDA parliamentary debate is based on the college American Parliamentary Debate Association format which is also used by several leagues in the US and Canada. CDA participants do not research or prepare their cases in advance of the tournament. The motion—the statement to be debated at a tournament—accompanied by several pages of resource material is given to the debaters approximately one hour before the first round of competition. During that hour, the debaters prepare their cases for both the Government or Affirmative (supporting the motion) and Opposition or Negative (opposing the motion). Teams will stand for both sides in alternating rounds during the tournament. Each team is composed of a pair of students (typically from the same school) who share the responsibilities of debating against an opposing team. A Judge decides and scores each match.

How can I participate in CDA tournaments?

Formally, to become a regular participant in CDA tournaments, interested schools must do the following:

- Join the Connecticut Debate Association by completing the membership form and submitting it with a check for CDA's annual dues.
- Secure the commitment of a responsible adult approved by the school who will coach their students, register them for tournaments, arrange their transportation to and from CDA events, accompany their students to all CDA events, and be responsible for their supervision and emergency contact information.
- Secure adult volunteers to serve as Judges at each tournament. Schools must bring one Judge, plus an additional Judge for every one to four debaters who will participate in a tournament.

Practically, though, our policy is “just show up” and we help you work out the details. We permit schools to attend a tournament either as debaters or as observers with no obligation.

For More Information

This handbook provides more information about the form and structure of Parliamentary Debate, effective debating and effective judging, as well as CDA policies. For more information please see:

- The [CDA website](#), especially the [Training Material](#) page, provides more details on parliamentary debate.
- The [Connecticut Association of Schools](#) website, for information regarding our supervising body.
- Email us at [CDA Inquiry](#) .

Parliamentary Debate Tournaments

Tournament Oversight

CDA tournaments are managed by the Tab Director(s) assigned to run the tournament by the CDA Executive Director. Questions, problems and concerns should be directed to them. They will be clearly identified during announcements at the start of the tournament, and can most frequently be found in “Tab”, a room designated for the work of scheduling and tabulating results.

Tournament Structure

There are two competitive divisions, Novice for the newer debaters and Varsity for the more experienced debaters. For both divisions there are four competitive rounds, each team (pair) debating against another team in its own division. The first round is randomly matched; the later rounds may be random or power matched. Each team should expect to debate twice in favor and twice opposing the motion.

There is a public, championship match between the top two Varsity teams. Debaters, Judges and Coaches are encouraged to watch the final round to improve their skills. After the final round, the top teams and speakers in each division are announced at an awards ceremony. Coaches also receive copies of their students’ ballots with the Judges’ scores and comments.

At in-person tournaments the teams arrive before 9AM. The motion is announced and case prep starts at 9AM. Things generally finish by 5:30PM. We try to stay close to the schedule below.

In some circumstance—COVID, inclement weather—we may hold tournaments online using various internet facilities.

Tournament Day Schedule

Time	Activity	Comment
8-9AM	Arrival and registration	Register, buy lunch tickets, gather in the cafeteria
9-10AM	Case Preparation	Packet distributed; teams prepare for debate
10-11:15AM	Round 1	Classrooms or online
11:15AM-12:30PM	Round 2	Classrooms or online
12:30-1:15PM	Lunch	Cafeteria
1:15-2:30PM	Round 3	Classrooms or online
2:30-3:45PM	Round 4	Classrooms or online
4-5PM	Final Round	Auditorium
5-5:30PM	Awards	Trophies, ballots and departure

Tournament Participation

Tournaments are held approximately once a month, October through April. We also hold a Novice Scrimmage in September to give new debaters a chance to get used to the format. Participation criteria are listed below.

Membership: CDA membership is open to high schools. Tournament participation is open to CDA member schools. Prospective member schools may contact the Executive Director to observe a tournament prior to joining CDA.

Registration: Participation at tournaments requires advance registration. Coaches will receive the registration information, including deadlines, via email.

Supervision: To attend any tournament, students must be accompanied by an adult approved by the student's school who possesses their emergency contact information and agrees to be responsible for supervising all students in their charge.

Adult Judges: All participating schools must bring adult volunteers to serve as Judges as follows: 1 initial Judge to meet CDA staffing needs, plus one for every set of 1-4 debaters. Therefore, 1-4 debaters = 2 Judges, 5-8 = 3 Judges, 9-12 = 4 Judges and so on. The initial Judge may be waived for schools that are hosting tournaments or providing full-time CDA staff volunteers. Coaches should have their prospective Judges read the Judges' training information prior to the tournament date. In addition, CDA will hold a Judges Training Workshop at each tournament, prior to the beginning of competition.

Observing CDA Policies: All tournament attendees are responsible to know and observe CDA Policies, both in this Handbook and in the [CDA Code of Conduct](#), or as set out by the Tab Director at the event. It is the responsibility of each school's Coach to insure that all of their attendees are aware of and abide by these policies. The Tab Director will adjudicate any disputes and has the authority to dismiss parties who do not abide by the decision.

Parliamentary Debate Form and Structure

Parliamentary Debate Form

The defining characteristic of Parliamentary Debate is that the participants do not extensively research or prepare their cases in advance of the tournament. Some formats will announce the motion—the statement to be debated at the tournament—shortly before the round begins, with a new motion for each round, and give the debaters 15 minutes to an hour to prepare.

In CDA, the motion is accompanied by several pages of resource material and is given to the debaters approximately one hour before the first round of competition. During that time, the debaters prepare their cases for both the Government or Affirmative (supporting the Motion) and Opposition or Negative (opposing the Motion). Each team must be prepared to stand for either side as determined by the schedule in each round. Teams are composed of a pair of students (usually from the same school) who share the responsibilities of debating against an opposing team. A Judge decides and scores each match.

A second characteristic of parliamentary debate is that the opposing team may interrupt a speaker with a question during the constructive speeches. The speaker may accept, defer or decline these questions, just as a speaker who has the floor in a real Parliament would. These “points of information” replace a separate cross-examination period found in other styles of debate.

Parliamentary Debate Structure

For each match, each team (Government and Opposition) decides which of its two students will speak first and which will speak second. The first speaker on Government is known as the Prime Minister (PM) and the second speaker is known as the Member of Government (MG). The first speaker on Opposition is known as the Leader of the Opposition (LO) and the second speaker is known as the Member of the Opposition (MO). All four debaters present a constructive speech; the PM and the LO each have a second, rebuttal speech. The order, length and purpose of each speech is given in the table.

Round Format

Prime Minister Constructive (PMC)	7 minutes	Provides an interpretation of the resolution and lays out the Government’s case
Leader of Opposition Constructive (LOC)	8 minutes	Lays out the Opposition case and replies to the Government case.
Member of Government Constructive (MGC)	8 minutes	Responds to previous arguments, and may introduce new points while doing so
Member of Opposition Constructive (MOC)	8 minutes	
Leader of Opposition Rebuttal (LOR)	4 minutes	Summarizes the debate from the Opposition perspective, while responding to arguments.
Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)	5 minutes	Summarizes the debate from the Government perspective, while responding to arguments.

Keeping Time

Most debaters time themselves and their opponents to pace themselves and to make sure their opponents don’t abuse the time available. Judges are officially responsible for monitoring the time of each speech to see that the limits are respected.

Each speaker is allowed 30 seconds grace at the end of each speech to finish a thought or a sentence gracefully. Judges take note: debaters should not abuse this grace period as an extra 30 seconds of speaking time to extend their arguments.

There is no prep time between speeches. Debaters are expected to rise to speak promptly, save a reasonable delay for the speaker who has finished to sit down and the next speaker to gather their notes and come to the podium.

The Speeches

Debate is a contest where debaters try to persuade the Judge to vote for their side of the motion based on spoken arguments. Debaters are not permitted to present the Judge or their opponents with written material or use any exhibits to enhance their presentation.

Debaters are also not required to follow any set format—aside from the order and length of the speeches—or present their arguments in any particular fashion. The following description of each speech reflects what many coaches advise and what many debaters do.

Prime Minister Constructive (PMC)

The Government team has the right to set the framework for the debate by defining terms or otherwise explain the meaning of the motion and the issues in dispute. The definitions must be a reasonable interpretation of the motion and allow the Opposition grounds to contest the Government's position. A definition what abuses the plain wording of the motion or a framework that cannot be argued against is not valid.

After defining the motion and presenting the framework, the PM may offer the Opposition a chance to ask a "Point of Clarification" to make sure the terms of the debate are clear. The Opposition may also rise and say, "Point of Clarification" (POC), if they are unsure of the Government's interpretation. A POC is simply that, a chance for each side to be sure they understand what Government believes the debate should be about. It should not be used by either side to present an argument for or against the motion. Time stops when a POC is asked, and restarts when it has been answered.

The PM then presents their case in support of their interpretation of the motion. These are usually in the form of "contentions", independent arguments in favor. They should be clearly stated and explained, and the PM should be clear when moving from one to the next. The speaker should develop the reasoning and facts which support each contention, and explain the impact of each, that is, why, if the Judge agrees the contention is true, the Judge should then vote in favor of the motion. Teams typically present 2 to 4 contentions, with 3 being common, but there is no required number, and teams need not format their case this way.

Leader of the Opposition Constructive (LOC)

The Leader of the Opposition (LO) has three objectives in their constructive: accept or contest the Government definitions and framework, present the Opposition case against the motion, and reply to the Government case.

If the Opposition team believes the Government interpretation of the motion is unreasonable or unfair, the LO should say so at the beginning of the LOC. They should specify what they disagree with, explain why it harms the debate, and present an alternative. It is not sufficient for the Opposition to simply prefer an alternative, or to complain the Government interpretation was not what the Opposition was

expecting. The Opposition must show either that the Government interpretation violates the plain English meaning of the motion, or that the Government interpretation leaves no reasonable arguments to contest the Government case. Otherwise the LO should accept the Government terms and move on.

Like the PM, the LO should present contentions to persuade the Judge to reject the motion. The comments above about these arguments also apply here: usually 2 to 4, clearly explained, supported by reason and facts, that imply the motion should be rejected. Again, there is no required number, and the Opposition case need not be formatted this way.

The LO should also reserve time to reply to the arguments made by the PM. Assuming the Government interpretation of the motion is reasonable, the LO should budget about half the constructive to presenting the Opposition case and the other half to answering the Government's. Note the LOC is one minute longer than the PMC as the LO has more to do than the PM.

Member of Government Constructive (MGC)

The MG has two jobs: present clear opposing arguments and reasoning against the Opposition team's case; and defend the Government case by replying to any rebuttal presented by the LO or by extending the reasoning and facts supporting the Government contentions. Teams may often have more reasons or facts to support an argument than can be presented in the PMC or LOC. The PM or the LO should present the strongest case first and allow the Member to use the remaining ones as needed and if time allows. The MG may also present additional contentions in support of the Government case, in addition to presenting new arguments in support of the PMC or in reply to the LOC.

Member of Opposition Constructive (MOC)

The MOC is similar to the MGC. The MO should reply to any arguments made in the MGC or in the PMC that were not covered by the LO that favor the Government case. The MO should also reply to any arguments made in the MGC against the Opposition case. Like the MG, the MO may present additional contentions in support of the Opposition case, as well as presenting new arguments in reply to any made by the earlier speakers.

The MOC is the last opportunity for the Opposition to present new arguments in the round. While the LO may present new examples to illustrate previous arguments, and may contrast points already made, the LO may not present new arguments in the Leader of the Opposition Rebuttal. The MO must be sure that an answer has been given to every argument made by the Government team, so the LO can use that if needed.

Leader of the Opposition Rebuttal (LOR)

The order of the speeches changes for the rebuttals so that the Government team has the last word in the debate. In the rebuttal, the LO should summarize the debate and explain why the balance of the arguments favor the Opposition. Neither team should expect to have carried every point they made during the round. The LO should fairly compare the arguments made by each side and weigh their relative significance. Ideally, the LO should present a "reason for decision" (more below) that the Judge could write on the ballot justifying a vote for the Opposition.

The LO may not present new arguments in the LOR. The LO may present new examples to illustrate previous arguments and may contrast points already made by either side.

Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)

In rebuttal, the PM's objective is similar to that of the LOR: summarize the debate and explain why the balance of arguments favors the Government. Neither team should expect to have carried every point. The PM should fairly compare the arguments made by each side and weigh the relative significance, presenting a "reason for decision" to the Judge.

Like the LO, the PM may not present new arguments in the PMR, with one exception. If the MO presented new arguments in the MOC, the PMR is the Government teams first opportunity to reply. The PM may present a new argument in the PMR if the PM can explain that it is in response to a new argument made in the MOC (or in the LOR).

Asking Questions During the Debate

Parliamentary debate allows three types of questions where one team may interrupt the other, instead of having a separate cross examination period: a Point of Clarification (POC), already described above; a Point of Information (POI) and a Point of Order (PO). This is similar to parliamentary practice when a speaker who has the floor must respond to other members, as opposed to courtroom practice where a witness takes the stand.

Debaters are expected to be polite in both asking and answering. They may emphatically support their position, but they should not be rude when doing so.

Point of Clarification (POC)

During the Prime Minister Constructive, immediately after the PM presents the Government definitions and framework, the PM may offer or the Opposition may request a Point of Clarification. Time stops. The Opposition may ask questions to confirm their understanding of the Government interpretation of the motion.

Neither the questions asked nor the answers given should be argumentative, in the sense of advancing either side's position. The purpose of a POC is to make sure the Opposition understands what the Government thinks the debate should be about. If the Opposition wants to challenge this interpretation, they must do so in the LOC as described above.

Time starts when the PM has answered the question.

Point of Information (POI)

During any constructive speech, the opposing team may attempt to interrupt the speaker with a question or short statement. To raise a POI one stands and says "Point" or "POI" or simply raises a hand, enough so the speaker notices the attempt but not so loud as to fully interrupt the speaker.

The speaker may accept the interruption and take the question, take the interruption after the speaker finishes their current argument, wave it off, or ignore it. If accepted, the person who raised the POI asks a short question or makes a short statement intended to undermine the argument being made. The speaker may respond however they choose and then continues to speak. There is no right to follow up a POI with another question, though the opposing team may stand or signal for another POI.

Time does not stop for a POI but takes from the speaker's allotted time. A speaker should be prepared to accept some POIs but should be careful not to take so many as to disrupt the speaker's presentation.

POIs are only permitted during the four constructive speeches and are not permitted during the first and last minute of each speech—called “protected time”—to allow the speaker to get started and finish undisturbed. POIs are not permitted during rebuttal.

Point of Order (PO)

A Point of Order is raised when one team believes the other has committed a violation. There are only two situations: a speaker exceeds the 30 second grace at the end of a speech, or the speaker presents what the opposing team believes is a new argument in rebuttal.

A team raises a PO by standing and saying “Point of Order” followed by either “speaker is out of time” or “new argument in rebuttal.” Time then stops to deal with the PO. If time is up, the speaker should simply sit and the debate should continue with the next speaker.

If one side claims a new argument has been made in rebuttal, the person who raised the argument should identify what the speaker has said which is new. The Judge should then ask the speaker to explain where the argument was raised earlier in the debate, or otherwise explain why it should not be considered a new argument (perhaps it is only a new example or a comparison of previous arguments, as described above). This is not intended to be an off-time debate between the two sides. The one raising the PO and the speaker each briefly state their position, and to not bicker back and forth.

The Judge should then decide either: “point well taken”, meaning the Judge agrees the argument is new and the speaker should stop presenting it; “point not well taken”, meaning the Judges agrees the argument is allowed and the speaker may continue; or “point taken under advisement”, in which case the speaker may continue presenting the argument but the Judge may or may not choose to credit it when deciding the round.

Time resumes and the speech continues once the Judge renders their decision.

A more complete discussion of Parliamentary debate can be found in the CDA Parli Style Guide on the [Training Material](#) page.

Fundamental Principles of Debating

There are many excellent texts, articles, websites, and other resources for debate, some of which can be found on the [Training Material](#) page of the CDA website. The intention here is to provide the basic principles most CDA debaters attend to: organization, contentions, arguments, questions, persuasion, civility.

Organization: Present your arguments in an orderly, logical way that can be followed. “Signpost” as you move from one to the next so the Judge knows where you are. A speaker should make clear links between what they are saying and the contentions or arguments being addressed. Preface your arguments with a brief remark signaling what a given argument links to. For example: “In our 1st contention we state...” or “In response to our opponent’s attack on our 3rd contention...”. Signposting goes a long way in making your case organization and your reasoning clear to the Judge

Contentions: In forming contentions, brevity is your ally. Contentions should be presented as complete sentences. Strive for clear, concise wording which strengthens your case, crisply articulates your arguments to the Judge and gives your opponent less to attack. You should also have a shorter “tagline” you can use to refer to each contention as you move through the debate.

A good contention should always answer the question “why” for the affirmative case or “why not” for the negative in direct response to the resolution

Three contentions is a good number but this is not a requirement. Too few, however, and your case may be weak, too many and time constraints may make it difficult to defend all of your points.

Arguments: Support your contentions with sound reasoning. An argument should consist of a claim you believe is true, the explanation and facts that support the claim, and the impact, if true, the claim has on the debate, either supporting your side of the motion or your contention.

Clash effectively with your opponent’s arguments. Each team has the obligation to clash with the arguments presented by the other team, specifically and in detail. A good debate does not sound like each team is arguing in a vacuum. A good debater listens to his opponents and responds directly to the arguments his opponents make. It is a legitimate practice for one team to point out that its opponent has not replied to certain arguments that the team has made if this is the case. The Judge may consider such arguments as counting against the team that has ignored or dropped them, assuming they are of substance.

Questions: Ask for restatement or clarification of the Government’s definitions, framework or interpretation of the motion if needed. Offer Points of Information that highlight weaknesses in the what the speaker is presenting. If your POI is not accepted, move on; questions lose relevance if the moment has passed. Strive to draw out useful information and utilize it in a subsequent speech.

Answer reasonable questions to the best of your ability. Ask for restatement or clarification of any questions that you find confusing. Strive to effectively defend your case and reply without losing the intended flow of your speech.

Persuasiveness: Speak with conviction and strive to present compelling reasoning. Contentions may stand alone or they may support each other in a comprehensive argument. The arguments may rely on

any commonly accepted modes of persuasion, such as logic, examples, evidence, scientific theory, practicality, benefit and harm, morality, and so forth

Presentation: During your speeches, address only the Judge, not your opponents. Sustain eye contact with the Judge or audience and speak with conviction. Use your speaking time effectively. Try to use all of the time allotted to you without being overly repetitive.

Civility: Be polite and respectful. You may be emphatic but not rude.

Fundamental Principles of Judging

Preparation

Judges should familiarize themselves with the CDA debate format and judging principles before the tournament. Judge training material can be found on the CDA website. The Coach of the team you are judging for should provide you with these and offer a chance for you to discuss anything you find confusing and answer any questions you have.

At the tournament you will need a device to time the debaters' speeches and writing materials to take notes. You may also want a water bottle to stay hydrated, and something to read or occupy yourself between judging assignments. If the tournament is using electronic ballots, you will need a laptop, tablet or phone to access the ballot; a laptop or tablet with a keyboard is preferable. Any electronic device will have a timer you can use for the round, and can be used to take notes, though many will prefer to take notes using paper and pen or pencil.

Before Each Round

Team and judge information are entered into a program that pairs contestants and assigns judges. If the tournament is online you will get email and text messages regarding your assignment. If the tournament is in-person you will receive instructions onsite about your assignment and picking up a ballot. Tournaments usually have a few more judges than they need. You should expect to judge most, but possibly not all, rounds.

When assigned a round, you should pick up or acknowledge your ballot and go promptly to the room set for the debate (or open the browser window for an online debate). You should begin the round as soon as all debaters are present. If any debaters are missing after 5 minutes, you should contact the Tab Director.

During the Round

The primary role of a Judge is to see the debate proceeds expeditiously, listen to the speeches and note the arguments presented, and render a decision. Judges typically do not intervene in the debate or comment on the presentations until after the round has been completed.

Take Notes: A debate round takes about one hour. Effective note-taking will help you remember and fairly evaluate the arguments presented. The CDA provides a standard debate "flow chart", a paper with one column per speech. Write down each team's contentions. Follow the clash of arguments through the debate and note when contentions are dropped or abandoned. Using a different color of ink for each team can sometimes help to track flow more easily.

Timekeeping: While most debaters will time themselves, the Judge is officially responsible to make sure speakers do not exceed the time allotted. Some Judges will provide silent hand signals for the speeches, forewarning students that their time is running short: two fingers for two minutes left, one finger for one minute left, one hand forming a "C" for 30 seconds left.

Speakers have a 30 second grace period beyond the time limit for each speech. This is intended to permit them to finish their thought without having to stop mid-sentence. It is not intended as an additional 30 seconds of speaking time. If the speaker hasn't finished after the grace period, the Judge should call time in a clear, firm voice.

Move the Debate Along: Speakers should follow one after another with a minimum delay, enough time as it reasonably takes for one speaker to sit down and the next to gather their papers and move to the podium. If the next speaker seems to be slow in rising, the Judge should remind them it is their turn to speak.

Intervention: Judges should not intervene in the round or comment on the speakers or arguments presented. A Judge may, but is not required to, ask a speaker to speak louder or more quietly, or speak more slowly, if the Judge is having trouble hearing the speaker. The Judge should not ask a speaker to explain if Judge does not understand what the speaker said or meant to say. It is the responsibility of the student to persuade the Judge, not the responsibility of the Judge to be persuaded.

Judges should intervene if a debater, in the Judge's opinion, is not behaving in a civil manner. In case of gross misconduct by one or both teams, the Judge may summarily end the round. The Judge should not attempt to discipline any debater but should go to the Tab Director to report the issue. The Tab Director will decide how to proceed.

After the Round

The next round of the tournament cannot proceed without the results of the current round. Judges are asked to render a decision and return the results to Tab promptly. You should make your decision before providing feedback to the debaters.

Making the Decision: Your written notes and memory of the round should guide your decision. The debate should go to the team that made the better arguments in support of their side of the motion. However, judging is inherently subjective, so it is difficult not to be influenced in some way by one's own opinions and the speaking ability of the debaters. All we ask is that Judges make an honest attempt to listen with an open mind and judge fairly based on what they hear.

Experienced Judges will have their own process. We recommend the following:

1. Decide who won. This is the easiest decision and the one where Judges show the greatest agreement.
2. Rank the speakers from 1 to 4, where 1 is the debater who made the most contribution to the debate and 4 is the debater who had the least impact. You must assign each rank: no ties.
3. Assign speaker points, 23-24 for a weak debater, 25-26 for an average debater, 27-28 for an exceptional debater. Half points are allowed. A score of 22 indicates a debater's behavior should be reported to their Coach. A score of 29 or higher indicates an truly outstanding performance. The reason for such a high score should be noted in the Judge's comments and may be questioned by the Tab Director.

Non-Disclosure: After the final speech, ask the students to vacate the room so that you can mark the ballot in privacy. Results are strictly confidential and must not be disclosed until the trophies are awarded at the end of the tournament. Debaters will be given copies of written ballots by Tab or have access to the comments on electronic ballots. You should keep your personal notes of the round in case questions arise, but you should not give them to the debaters.

Comments to Debaters: Judges are encouraged to provide *brief* oral feedback to debaters, and provide at least a written "reason for decision" (RFD) on the ballot. The ballot has room for additional feedback to each team and debater should a Judge wish to provide it.

Judges are asked to balance their desire to provide feedback with the need to return results to Tab so the tournament can proceed. A Judge may add or edit comments on an electronic ballot for several hours after the tournament ends, and so should submit the result and provide oral comments before spending time writing comments. With paper ballots, Tab can return a ballot to a Judge for additional written comments once the data—win/loss, ranks, scores—have been entered.

Ballot Return: Electronic ballots may be submitted directly. Please be sure to confirm the result when asked. Paper ballots must be returned to Tab by you in person. You should not give your ballot to anyone else. If the next round follows immediately, you will be able to pick up your next ballot when you turn in the one you have. ***Never go to the next round unless you have turned in your ballot for the current round.***

Questions and Concerns: Any questions or concerns should be taken to the Tab Director, who can usually be found in the Tab Room. Judges should never discipline debaters, aside from the types of comments during the round as described above. Judges should never discuss behavioral issues to the debater’s coach. The Tab Director will decide whether and what further actions to take.

Some Tips for Effective Judging:

1. Acknowledge a judging assignment promptly. Go directly to the designated room or open the online debate window and begin the round as soon as all debaters are present.
2. Avoid bias. Your personal opinions on the motions should not enter into your decision.
3. Debaters can’t be expected to know what you know, so don’t hold them to that standard.
4. Judge the debate on what is presented by the debaters.
5. There is no CDA dress code. A student’s attire should not be considered when judging the round.
6. Unless debaters are unacceptably rude or behave inappropriately, don’t interrupt the debate.
7. Terms should be defined at the beginning of the debate. The Government team has the right to present reasonable definitions. The Opposition team may only challenge those definitions by explaining why they are unreasonable.
8. New arguments may only be raised in the CONSTRUCTIVE speeches.
9. During REBUTTAL speeches, a team may support existing arguments with new illustrations and examples as long as the underlying reasoning is not new.
10. A “dropped” point is an argument or contention that is ignored by the opposing team. This weighs against the scoring of the team that dropped it.
11. When using paper ballots, please try to write legibly so that debaters can read your comments.

Important CDA Policies

The [CDA Code of Conduct](#) provides a full statement of our expectations of debaters, Coaches and Judges.

Supervision of Students

To attend any tournament, students must be accompanied by an adult who possesses their emergency contact information and agrees to be responsible for supervising all students in their charge.

Providing Judges

All participating schools must bring adult volunteers to serve as Judges as follows: one initial Judge to meet CDA staffing needs, plus one for every set of 1-4 debaters. Therefore, 1-4 debaters = 2 Judges, 5-8 = 3 Judges, 9-12 = 4 Judges and so on. The initial Judge may be waived for schools that are hosting tournaments or providing full-time CDA staff volunteers.

Coaches are responsible to educate their Judges by providing them with the Judges' training information prior to the tournament date. While CDA will hold a Judges Training Workshop at each tournament while the debaters are preparing their cases, this is only one hour, not enough time to cover everything a Judge should know.

Rudeness

Debaters are expected to be polite and respectful to each other and to the Judge at all times. Shouting, bullying, harassment, threats, violence, name calling, insults, unbecoming language or any similar behavior is never appropriate at any time during the debate. Debaters may be emphatic but not rude.

A Judge may caution debaters, who, in the opinion of the Judge, overstep the bounds of acceptable behavior. The appropriate penalty for rude behavior is a reduction in speaker points and a corresponding reduction in ranks on the ballot, or, in extreme cases, directed loss. A Judge may, in the face of flagrant misbehavior, end the debate and declare a directed loss against the offending team. Incidents of rudeness should be reported to the Tab Director, who will determine if further action should be taken.

Student Attire

For all CDA events, students are expected to comply with their school's dress code standards. A student's attire is not to be considered in judging a round. If a Judge feels that a student's attire is inappropriate, they should bring it to the attention of the Tab Director.

Ethics in Argumentation and Evidence

Debaters are expected to be truthful and honest with respect to the arguments they make and the evidence or examples they cite. Debaters should not lie or fabricate evidence or examples or use evidence or examples that they know to be untrue.

Judges should note that Parliamentary debate does limit the material available to debaters as well as the time available to prepare their case. Debaters should not be penalized for honest mistakes; we all say things we are sure are true but turn out not to be.

However, blatant or flagrant dishonesty may be penalized in judging a round. Any further disciplinary actions are at the discretion of the Tab Director.

Hardcopy Resources

Debaters are limited to the following resources when preparing their cases and during the debates:

- The motion and packet distributed at the tournament.
- A dictionary.
- A copy of the U.S. Constitution, including preamble and amendments.
- A copy of a standard, single-volume almanac.
- Their own knowledge of the topic.
- Notes taken during the tournament.

Debaters are encouraged to use arguments or information they learn from opposing teams in early rounds against their opponents in later round.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices may not be used by debaters for research or to otherwise obtain assistance, either during the case preparation period or during the debates, whether the tournament is in person or online. Debaters may not use cases prepared, or research material collected, outside of the tournament and stored on an electronic device. Electronic devices include, but are not limited to, laptop computers, tablets, cell phones and so forth.

At in person tournaments, debaters may, at the discretion of the Tab Director, use electronic devices as word processors to write their cases or take notes during the round.

For online tournaments, it is expected that debaters will use their electronic devices to take notes and communicate with their partners, especially if their partner is not located in the same facility.

Varsity and Novice Eligibility

CDA tournaments typically have both a Varsity and a Novice division to permit students to face competition matched to their ability, experience, and confidence.

A debater wishing to compete as Novice must meet the following criteria:

- The Novice division is open to Freshman and Sophomores, regardless of experience or record. They may qualify and participate as Novices in State Finals both years. However, they may move up to Varsity at any time if they or their coach choose, and once having moved up, may not return to Novice. Coaches are encouraged to move Sophomores up to Varsity if they have been successful as a Freshman but are not required to do so.
- Juniors who have never debated before in CDA may participate as Novices in their first regular CDA tournament. Otherwise they must debate in Varsity. Juniors may only compete at State Finals in Varsity. Juniors may only qualify for State Finals while debating in Varsity.
- Seniors may not participate as Novices in any CDA tournament.

The CDA does not maintain records on the age or grade level of any debater. The CDA expects each Coach to comply with these criteria and be responsible to enter their students in the appropriate division. The Tab Director may reassign a debater if the Tab Director believes the debater has been entered in the wrong division.

Eligibility for State Finals

The last scheduled tournament of the year is the State Final tournament and is open only to those debaters who have qualified during the year at one of the regular monthly tournaments.

Students as individuals, and qualify separately for Novice and Varsity divisions at State Finals, either:

- By winning a trophy at a regular tournament, either as an individual speaker or as a member of a team
- By being part of a team that goes undefeated at two different regular tournaments

After the last regular tournament of the year, the Executive Director compiles a list of State Finals qualifiers and sends each Coach the names of their debaters who are entitled to compete. The Coach must send teams made up of these qualifiers to the extent possible; debaters need not attend State Finals with their regular partner. Where a Coach has an odd number of debaters, either in Varsity or in Novice, who will attend, they may add one debater per division to complete the last two person team.