

2025-2026 Parliamentary Debate Rules



I. Statement of Purpose

Parliamentary debate is an advanced form of debate that is extemporaneous in nature with rotating topics. Parliamentary debate asks competitors to develop and defend ideas and positions on a wide range of issues. The purpose of Parliamentary debate is to instill in Christian home school students the skills of presentation, critical thinking, reasoning, and analysis of various issues. That endeavor is accomplished in an environment of honorable competition that cultivates maturity, wisdom, grace, poise, and brings glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Parliamentary Debate Team Eligibility

Each debater must have reached age sixteen (16) by October 1st of the competition year, or have competed for two or more years in another debate format, or receive consent from her/his coach. A parliamentary debate team consists of two competitors. A team may not switch partners within a single tournament.

III. Parliamentary Debate Teams and Objectives

- A) The Parliamentary debate round consists of two teams.
 - 1) The Government team is comprised of the Prime Minister and Member of Government.
 - 2) The Opposition team is comprised of the Leader of Opposition and Member of Opposition.
- B) The Government team shall affirm the resolution.

IV. Resolution Announcement and Preparation Time

- A) The resolution shall be announced at a specified time before each round.
- B) The official start of preparation time shall be announced with the topic.
- C) Once the resolution has been announced, each team will have twenty (20) minutes to prepare for the debate and walk to their competition room.
- D) Debaters are responsible for monitoring their preparation time and should arrive promptly in their event room before the allotted preparation time has expired.

- E) Competitors may prepare using whatever resources they have available during preparation time, including electronic devices, unless otherwise indicated by tournament leadership.

V. During the Debate

A. Speech Order:

Speeches shall proceed in the following order with the indicated maximum speech times:

Prime Minister Constructive	7 minutes
Leader of Opposition Constructive	7 minutes
Member of Government Constructive	7 minutes
Member of Opposition Constructive	7 minutes
Leader of Opposition Rebuttal	5 minutes
Prime Minister Rebuttal	5 minutes

B. Constructive and Rebuttal Speeches:

- 1) The Prime Minister shall state the resolution during the first speech.
- 2) Debaters may introduce new arguments during all constructive speeches.
- 3) No new lines of argumentation may be presented in rebuttal speeches. Rebuttal speeches may include new examples, analysis, and analogies offered to support or refute previously introduced lines of argumentation.

C. Use of Information:

- 1) Parliamentary debate is unique among debate formats in that it accepts the voice of the debater as an authority on the subject being debated. The use of information in Parliamentary debate is not equivalent to evidentiary debate as in Team Policy. All types of support are treated equally in the Parliamentary round.
- 2) Parliamentary Debate makes use of a wide variety of support to defend and clarify arguments, which may include (but is not limited to) logic, definitions, facts, examples, applications, analogies and other relevant information.
- 3) Information utilized in the round is to be within the realm of knowledge of educated and informed citizens.
- 4) Judges may disallow overly specific information.
- 5) Debaters are responsible for all information presented in the round. Fabrication of information is strictly prohibited.
- 6) No materials may be brought into the debate round for a debate team's use except those handwritten by the two debaters during preparation time, a printed copy of the resolution if provided by tournament leadership, and a copy of the Stoa Parliamentary Rules.
- 7) Debaters may not display "props" to the judge at any point in the round. A "prop" is defined as an object that substitutes an oral communication with a visual depiction.
- 8) During the debate, electronic devices may only be used for timing. They may not be used to send or receive information from any source. A stand-alone calculator is allowed.

D. Points of Information:

- 1) An opponent may request a point of information—orally, by rising, or by raising a hand or other similar attention-grabber—at any time after the first minute and before the last minute of any constructive speech. All other points of information are out of order.
- 2) No points of information will be allowed in rebuttals.
- 3) The debater holding the floor has the discretion to accept or refuse points of information, and interact with the point as desired.
- 4) The speaking time of the debater with the floor continues during the point of information exchange.
- 5) A point of information may be phrased as a concise question or a statement.
- 6) Any follow-up question or statement by the opponent should be considered a new point of information.

E. Points of Order:

A point of order is a serious charge and should not be raised for minor violations.

- 1) **How to Initiate:** If at any time, a debater believes that his or her opponent has violated a rule, the debater shall orally state “Point of Order” and any speech time in progress shall pause for the exchange. The debater must state and explain the rule violation.
- 2) **How to Respond:** The other team must yield the floor if a speech is in progress and may make a brief response that may:
 - a) Agree that something is out of order; or
 - b) Disagree, and briefly explain why.
- 3) **How to Facilitate as Judge:**
 - a) After the exchange, the judge has discretion and may respond. An example of each of the three types of responses are below:
 - i) Point Well Taken / I Agree / That was Out of Order
 - ii) Point Not Well Taken / I Disagree / That was In Order
 - iii) Point Under Consideration / I am Not Sure / I’ll have to Think About it.
 - b) If there is a panel of judges, after the debater briefly explains the point of order and their opponent briefly replies, the panel may either (1) take a vote on the objection, or (2) inform the debaters that the panel will take the point of order under consideration and the round shall continue.
- 4) The speaking time of the debater with the floor stops during the Point of Order exchange.

F. Indicators of Agreement:

- 1) Judges, observers, and debaters may indicate agreement with the speaker through gestures or audible acknowledgement.
- 2) Agreement indicators must neither interrupt the speaker nor cause undue distraction to the judge.
- 3) The judge shall exercise personal discretion and may ask audience members to limit or stop their signs of support, and to leave if they do not comply.
- 4) Audience members may not give verbal, non-verbal or written communication to the debaters at any time during the debate round.

G. The Judge

- 1) Stoa acknowledges the judge as the “first line of defense” for all rule infractions, ethical questions, irregularities, and disciplinary issues.

- 2) The judge is at liberty to use all aspects of the round to reach a conclusion regarding the ballot.
- 3) In confusing or flagrant situations, the judge should seek guidance from the judge orientation staff or tournament leadership.
- 4) If manipulation, misrepresentation, fabrication of evidence, or gross negligence under evidence rules is suspected, it should be brought to the attention of tournament leadership once the round is completed.
- 5) Ignorance of the rules does not constitute a valid excuse.
- 6) In the unlikely event that the conduct of both teams requires disciplinary action, the ballot may be cast for a double loss and tournament leadership should be consulted once the round is completed.

H. Enforcement

For a rule violation, tournament leadership or an adjudication committee as appointed by tournament leadership has overall discretion in all disciplinary matters. Such discretion may include: education of the debaters, the request of behavioral or material changes, reduction of speaker points, overturn of a round decision, or disqualification from the tournament.