

A Beginner's Guide to British Parliamentary Debate

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British Parliamentary debate, or **BP** for short, is a style of competitive debate commonly used by universities around the world – it has gained so much prominence that it has since been adopted as the official style of the **World Universities Debating Championship**. In British Columbia, there are several BP debate tournaments, including the upcoming British Parliamentary Provincial Qualifier.

Debating well has to do with how persuasive your arguments are. Debate is about **rational, effective argumentation**, supported by lots of **evidence** and **analysis**. A **panel of judges** (consisting of other debaters) watches and adjudicates each round, choosing winners.

Crucially note that speaking times, cutoffs for protected time, and various tournament-specific rules will differ from this guide. **You are encouraged to reach out to local tournament organizers to confirm any uncertainties.**

Topics: In BP debate, the topic of debate and your position are chosen randomly. **Fifteen minutes** before the debate begins, you will learn of the topic and what stance you must take (pro or con). You and your teammate (**teams of two**) will have fifteen minutes to prepare your arguments. Topics can span a variety of topics, from international relations to economics to social policy.

Positions: There are four teams in BP debate, consisting of “**Opening Government**”, “**Opening Opposition**”, “**Closing Government**”, and “**Closing Opposition**”. Each team consists of two members, each of whom will give one seven minute speech. Teams are ranked from 1 through 4 – and they do not have to be ranked in accordance with whether they are government or opposition.

In other words, Opening Government could be ranked first, Closing Opposition ranked second, Opening Opposition third and Closing Government fourth; any ranking is possible. The team ranking 1st in the room receives 3 points, 2nd place receives 2 points, 3rd place receives 1 point and 4th place receives 0 points.

The order of speaking, plus the role of each position, is displayed below:

<u>Government</u>	<u>Opposition</u>
1. Modeling/Constructive	2. Refutation/Construction
3. Refutation/Constructive	4. Refutation/Construction
5. Refutation/Extension	6. Refutation/Extension
7. Refutation/Whip	8. Refutation/Whip

Construction: The most important part of any speech, this simply means **positive content** in favor of your side's position. In other words, reasons why your side is correct.

Refutation: Note that this exists in every speech, but the first – basically, refutation just means responding to the person before you. During refutation you should start by restating what the previous speaker's important arguments were and explaining why they are flawed.

Extension: Very similar to construction, this is simply a **positive argument** in favor of your side. It is an “extension” in the sense that you want to extend your side's case, bringing forward **new arguments** or angles that preceding teams have not considered in depth.

Whip: As these are the last speakers in the round, the whip speakers are **not meant to bring forward any new arguments**. Instead, they “whip” — meaning they present a **biased summary** of the round in which they explain what happened in the round, explaining why their extension was the strongest and the most important analysis in the round and why the opponent's arguments are flawed.

Modeling: The first team's first speaker has an obligation to provide a **model**. When given a topic, the topic is often vague. For example, in “This House would negotiate with terrorists,” who is “this house?” What do you mean by “negotiate?” How do you define “terrorists?” An effective model will **define terms** and explain the exact **course of action** for implementing the policy.

Points of Information: Whenever someone else is speaking, you can stand up quietly and offer a POI (Point of Information). The current speaker always has control of the floor, and can choose whether to accept your POI, or wave you down. If the speaker chooses to acknowledge your POI, you will have **ten to fifteen seconds** to provide a **statement, question or counterpoint**, and the current speaker will try their best to respond. It is suggested that you try to accept **1-2** POIs per speech. The first thirty seconds and last thirty seconds of a speech are protected time, meaning that you cannot offer POIs during these periods. In a seven minute speech, the **first and last minute are protected**.

Potential Ways to Analyze a Topic

Social	Political	Economic	Socioeconomic classes
Military	Moral	Environmental	Consumerism
Education	Technological	Intellectual	Accountability/ Responsibility
Local	Provincial	National	International
Short-term	Long-term	Practical Imperative	Moral Obligation
Crime	Terrorism	Justice	Competition
Censorship	Privacy vs. Safety	Health/Wellbeing	Imperialism/Globalization

Additional Video BP Resources

Introduction to BP Debate - York University Debating Society

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUt1IVr7gig>

British Parliamentary Debate Example Video - Western Australia Debating League

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwqLs481F7E>