

Adjudication

The goal of competitive debating is to persuade.

The key to being persuasive is to present arguments that support a position and counter arguments that refute an opposing position. By itself, however, presenting well-reasoned arguments and counter argument will not usually be enough to guarantee success. A debater's speech must be well organized so that the debater makes good use of his or her time. The speech should also be delivered with confidence and flair. And finally, debaters on a team should show evidence of working together.

At the conclusion of a debate, the adjudicator will provide a (maximum) ten minute presentation to judge and score the debate. The word of the adjudicator is final and the speaker will declare the motion either carried or defeated based on the verdict of the adjudicator. (The popular vote is for interest and comparison/contrast only).

In order, these are the essential responsibilities of the Adjudicator:

1. **Assign each debating team a score** as defined in this criteria such that the winner is determined correctly.
2. Identify the **strengths and weaknesses** of the teams and the individual speakers and provide **constructive criticism** on how to improve.

A speech is scored on **five key elements**. The adjudicator should spend time discussing how each team performed in regard to each of these elements.

1) Argumentation and Analysis [30%]

A team should present three or four separate and distinct arguments. Each argument should be supported by evidence. And each argument should be clearly related to the resolution.

If a **Logical Fallacy** is correctly identified by the opposing team, that argument is *nullified* and does not count toward scoring. (It is as if the argument was not made). See also reference.

2) Content [20%]

An argument must be backed up with evidence. This can take the form of statistics, real-life examples and factual knowledge. The content must not veer into Special Knowledge.

3) Rebuttal and Refutation [20%]

After the Prime Minister's speech, the focus of the remaining speeches will be on rebuttal. Each argument presented by a speaker must be opposed by each successive speaker with a counter argument. A single dropped argument will not automatically mean the team loses the debate but a convincing refutation of most of the opponent's points will be necessary to carry the debate.

Integrating into the Debate: *Also for consideration - acknowledging what the opposing side presents in their debate.* If a team sticks to their prepared talking points in spite of the resolution definition or the evolution of the debate, they should be penalized. This is not to suggest the team should contradict themselves (see Teamwork): but to not address the opposing sides arguments and instead stick with what the team has prepared regardless of relevance to what has been said is a weakness and should be judged as such.

If the Opposition accepts the resolution as defined by the Government, they must present arguments and counter arguments that relate to the resolution as defined; failure to do so is fatal. However, the exception to this is when the **Opposition is challenging the definition of the resolution**.

In a normal debate (i.e. not a Cross Examination debate), The Prime Minister is not be scored for refutation in his/her first speech; the team score is averaged over the two speeches. [View/download official scorecards](#) for details.

A summation does not contain new rebuttals. The adjudicator will deduct points for new arguments in a summation.

4) Style and Rhetoric [20%]

The manner in which arguments are presented can, at times, be as important as the arguments themselves. A smooth, polished and confident speaking style is very persuasive. And using rhetorical techniques and flourishes to add flair to a speech can heighten the impact of the speech. Effective use of humour can be a very powerful style element as can an apt quote.

Banging on the table and **heckling** (defined as "an occasional single-word outburst; e.g. "source", "shame") are *within the acceptable realm in the spirit of fun*. If the outburst is well timed and comical, the adjudicator may even *award* points for comedy. Beyond this, the Speaker will get involved to put the debaters back in line and the adjudicator should also deduct points for rowdiness.

5) Teamwork [10%]

Debaters are expected to perform as a team. Earlier speakers set the stage for latter speakers while those following expand on and reinforce earlier arguments. A follow-up speaker may need to clarify (and even correct) a point made by an earlier speaker. This should be done very carefully, however, because **contradictions and inconsistencies between speakers can be fatal**.

In short, a team gains points for supporting each other and providing a unified message. A team loses points for changing arguments mid-stream, contradicting each other, etc.

Special Debate Formats

When **Points of Information** are accepted for a debate, a debater will lose points for:

- Attempts to raise a POI outside of time limit;
- Too long of a question;
- Attempt at a follow up question; and
- Not using/accepting POI.

However, they will gain points for:

- POI successfully distracting speaker; and
- Accepting POI within a reasonable window, and not letting it distract.

In a **Cross Examination** debate, a debater will lose points for:

- Monologues (instead of asking questions); and
- Being flustered by questions.

However, they will gain points for:

- Questioning based on what was said in the debate; and
- Handling questions well

Resources and Further Reading

Please continue exploring Adjudication here:

- [Guided adjudication example.](#)
- [View/download official scorecards.](#)
- [The definition, opposition challenges of.](#)