

CDA Parliamentary Judge Instructions¹

These are basic instructions to the judge for high school parliamentary debate in the CDA. There is a companion Style Guide for debaters.

Basics

Parliamentary debate has two teams, a Government (also called Proposition) and an Opposition, each with two members, the Prime Minister and Member of Government on one side, and the Leader of the Opposition and Member of the Opposition on the other. Each side tries to persuade the Judge or audience to vote for their side. The speeches are as follows:

Prime Minister Constructive (PMC)	7 minutes	Provides an interpretation of the motion 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 arguments 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 previous arguments.
Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)	5 minutes	Summarizes the debate from the Government perspective, while responding to previous arguments.

Each speaker has a 30 second grace period at the end of their allotted time to finish their speech, after which they are out of order.

There is no preparation time or pause between speeches other than a reasonable allowance for the previous speaker to be seated and the next speaker to take the floor.

The Motions

The motion is a short statement of fact that serves as the topic of debate. The motions all will concern issues that should be familiar to the average high school student. Some sample motions:

This house believes assisted suicide should be legal in the United States.

This house would allow foreign-born citizens to be President of the United States.

This house would use force to spread democracy internationally.

Three motions will be provided for the day. The students will have one hour prior to the first round to read the packet and prepare brief cases for and against each resolution.

The motion used in each round is chosen as follows:

- The judge flips a coin, and one team calls it in the air. The winner of the coin flip decides whether that team would prefer choice of motion or choice of side.
- The team that has the right to choose the motion as the result of the coin flip picks a motion.
- The team that has the right to choose the side then makes its choice of side.

Debaters will have prepared their cases in the morning, so the debate begins immediately.

Script

The Judge, also called the Speaker of the House, will typically conduct the round by following a script, patterned after English parliamentary practice.

¹ Based on the Osterweis Judge Instructions which may be found on the Yale Debate Association web site www.yaledebate.org.

Constructives

- To begin the round: “I call this house to order and call upon the honorable Prime Minister to deliver the first speech of the round not to exceed seven minutes.”
- Before LOC: “I thank the honorable Prime Minister and call upon the Leader of the Opposition to deliver a speech not to exceed eight minutes.”
- Before MGC: “I thank the honorable Leader of the Opposition and call upon the Member of Government to deliver a speech not to exceed eight minutes.”
- Before MOC: “I thank the honorable Member of Government and call upon the Member of Opposition to close out the constructive portion of the round in a speech not to exceed eight minutes.”

Rebuttals

- Before LOR: “I thank the honorable Member of Opposition and call upon the Leader of Opposition to deliver the first rebuttal speech of the round not to exceed four minutes, reminding him/her that while new examples are welcome, new arguments are not.”
- Before PMR: “I thank the honorable Member of Opposition and call upon the Prime Minister to deliver the final speech of the round not to exceed five minutes, reminding him/her that while new examples are welcome, new arguments are not.”

After the final speech, the judge may give a brief oral critique of the debate. The judge should not disclose the decision to the students.

Decisions

The judge should ask the students to leave the room and take a few minutes to decide the round and fill out the ballot.

- First decide which side won. Make your decision based on which team more compellingly won the larger issues in the round. The teams should tell you which issues they think are most important during rebuttals and why they believe that they won those issues. If they fail to do so explicitly, use your discretion. In a tie, the decision should go to the opposition.
- Second, rank the speakers from 1 to 4, with 1 being the best. A speaker’s rank should take into account both argument and presentation skills. Speakers may not tie on ranks.
- Assign each debater points from 23 (patently offensive) to 27 (Winston Churchill on a good day). Debaters may tie in speaker points but not in ranks. Points above 27 or below 23 may have to be justified to the tabroom and should be rare. A judge may award a win to the team with the lower point total, but these should also be rare.
- Provide written comments to the students on the ballot supporting your decision and making suggestions for improvement.
- Do not disclose your decision to the students.

Keeping Time

The judge or a timekeeper will need to time the speeches during the round. This can be a little tricky, as time should stop during two types of questions, a Point of Clarification (POC) or a Point of Order (PO), but not during a Point of Information (POI). See the Style Guide for a discussion of these questions.

For more information, refer to the Style Guide or speak to the Tab Director.